The Washington Monthly

JULY/AUGUST
2000

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By Nicholas Thompson

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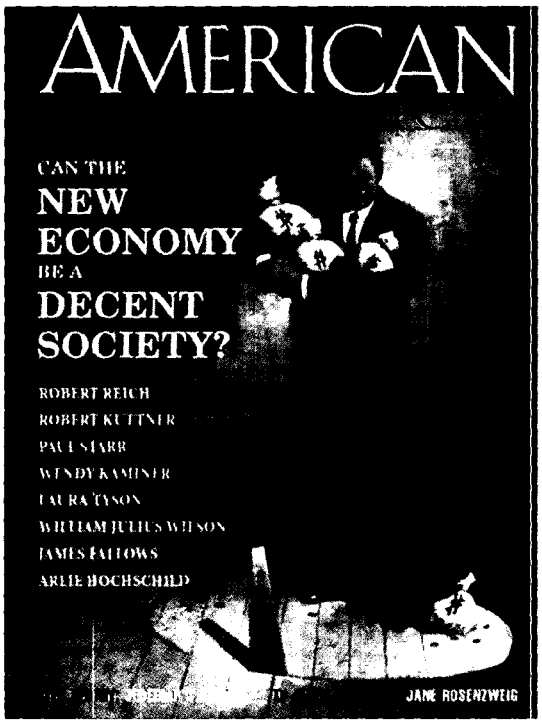

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The Washington Monthly

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Letters

The Not So Great Generation

Tom Brokaw claims that the greatest generation was the World War II generation. Paul Begala, in the April 2000 issue of *Esquire* says that the worst generation is the Baby Boomers. ("Tilting at Windmills," June 2000).

In other words, the greatest generation was also the worst generation of parents.

MAUREEN J. EHNSTROM
Winchendon, Mass.

Presidential Scope

Allan Lichtman, in his review of *The Presidential Difference* in the May issue, takes author Fred Greenstein to task for not writing the book that Lichtman preferred had been written. He criticizes Greenstein for examining only presidents since 1932 and argues that many other presidents did important things in our history. This is obviously true, but an examination of the modern presidency is more relevant to contemporary experience and is a widely accepted approach to analyzing the contemporary presidency. Lichtman misinterprets Greenstein's purpose as attempting to "test a typology of presidential leadership." But that was not Greenstein's purpose; he wants to gain insights into how presidents can be effective by examining six categories of relevant presidential performance. That other dimensions of presidential performance might be examined, as Lichtman argues, is true but beside the point.

Another criticism is that Greenstein attempts "to deconstruct presidents as the sum of separate parts." But that is not at all what Greenstein is trying to do; his aim is much more limited. His book is an analysis of some of the important skills and attributes that are essential in the modern presidency. Greenstein explicitly chose not to deal with the political values of the presidents but rather with the means they had at their disposal to achieve whatever ends they sought.

It would be unfortunate if your readers missed this excellent and insightful analysis of the modern presidents because of this review—even if it does not cover *all* of the dimensions of *all* presidents in our history.

JAMES P. PFIFFNER
PROFESSOR,
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Fairfax, Va.

Final Insult

Your note ("Tilting at Windmills," June 2000) about the insurance industry's abuse of black customers reminds me of why burial insurance was so vital in black communities in the past. Too often the mummified body that wound up on the medical student's anatomy table was African-American, and black people had an understandable horror of suffering this final insult from the white world. A dear (white) friend of mine once explained this to me while displaying his own partially dismembered (black) cadaver on a lab table at the University of Maryland Medical School. I had it confirmed while covering the mostly black precincts of West Baltimore in the late 1940s.

RUSSELL BAKER
Leesburg, Va.

Missing Kovach

I read with particular interest Tracy Thompson's worthy tribute to Bill Kovach ("A Newsroom Hero," May 2000). As an avid newspaper reader who did a comparative look at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* "then" (during Kovach's short-lived tenure as editor) and "now," I dissected a week's coverage from each era to verify the stark contrast. To say such a freelance exercise found today's *AJC* marked by less copy (more ad space), less investigative zeal, less substance, and less surprise is to trifle with understatement. In too many monopoly-owned-newspaper towns such findings are the norm rather than the exception.

Lack of meaningful "context" in mass-media coverage cannot help but affect how we grapple to resolve problems that do not lend themselves to simplistic quick-fix answers. Full access to the day's intelligence is part of the role of a responsible and vital

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press and is too often overlooked in a picture-driven, soundbite news culture. Rather than being one among a nearly extinct breed of old-guard press critics, Mr. Kovach is one of those true believers in the role of newspapers in a functioning democracy who shows the way to their very survival.

BARBARA ALLEN KENNEY
Atlanta, Ga.

Paying for Blackboards

In "You Still Need a Blackboard," (June 2000), Jonathan Schorr fairly points out that charter schools need more than a dash of reformist zeal to survive and thrive. They need, for starters, a decent place to hold classes. Politicians of varied stripe revel in the rapid growth of charters over the past decade, but issues of quality must be paramount.

Organizers of charter schools almost invariably cite facilities as their biggest challenge. There are ways government might help without smothering the charter movement with excessive regulation.

One possibility is New Mexico Rep. Heather Wilson's proposal that the federal government set aside $600 million to guarantee loans to incipient charter schools by local banks. She figures that would release about $9 billion in charter-school financing. Another possibility would be a policy giving charters first claim on second-hand facilities, such as post offices, military bases, or other public schools. Charter organizers frequently have been resourceful in converting abandoned property to good educational use.

Charter schools don't need stifling regulation, such as would come with the Clinton Administration's bid—as part of the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization—to require that 95 percent of all teachers be government-licensed within four years. A charter-school strength is the ability to hire teachers with real-world experience outside the ed-school track. But Washington could help with policy tweaks—for example, requiring that state and local education agencies provide charter schools their fair share of federal funds for such expensive programs as special education.

ROBERT HOLLAND
SENIOR FELLOW
LEXINGTON INSTITUTE
Arlington, Va.

Prescription Perks and Promos

I have a couple of comments on Stephen Pomper's article "Drug Rush" (May 2000).

First, regarding the stories of physicians who actually solicit rewards for prescription loyalty (such as Knicks tickets), I would give the doctors the benefit of the medical, if not moral, doubt and suggest that they may have fully intended to issue such prescriptions where warranted in the first place. But when a representative arrives, ready to pander, the physician may think he may as well try to get a perk out of it.

Second, as a patient, I can tell you that promotional pens, pads, clipboards, and other small office gratuities are influential indeed. When I have seen these in my doctor's office, I have assumed that the doctor was an advocate of these medications over others for similar conditions. After reading your article, I realize that these may just be handy to use because they're available for free, perhaps even helping to lower the office visit fee charged by my physician.

RUTH L. LYONS
Queens Village, N.Y.

NOTE TO READERS:

We recently experienced a breakdown of our computer system that may have resulted in the loss of some electronic correspondence that we received during the first week of June. If you have any question about whether your correspondence was received during this time, please resend it to editors@washingtonmonthly.com. We apologize for the inconvenience.

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Fleeing Fort Detrick • Dancing at Fort Blossom • Sir John and Lady Bracknell
New Perspectives on 10 Percent • The Flush Factor • Prime Time Pataki

IS 10 PERCENT 10 PERCENT? It all depends, as our leader has pointed out, on how you define it. Among the more creative definers are Texas public school officials. Confronted with a requirement that students must rank in the top 10 percent of their graduating class to be automatically admitted to a state university, Westlake High School in Austin has decided that 10 percent really means 12.8 percent. But Lyndon Baines Johnson High School found that definition too narrow. With an imaginative approach to fact worthy of the man for whom it is named, Johnson High School decided that 15 percent captures the essence of 10 percent even better.

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AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I THINK history will be kinder to Bill Clinton than the pundits of today are. This would not be unusual. In my lifetime, only Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy left office highly esteemed. Truman, Eisenhower, Johnson, Ford, Carter, Reagan—even Nixon—are more valued today than at the end of their presidencies. Truman and Reagan are close to canonization.

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ONE OF MY HOMETOWN'S truly great sons died in May. Dr. Bert Bradford was not only an excellent physician, he was a community leader, a hero in World War II, and a man of infinite kindness. He lived for 90 years. "I have loved helping people over the years and I feel that has contributed to my good health," he once told a group of medical students. "Staying active through gardening, fishing, cooking, hunting, and tennis has given me great joy. I have found myself much more content in these activities than in driving fancy cars and living in expensive homes."

There is a neoliberal solution to the low-flow toilet debate.

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GEORGE W. BUSH has proposed deeply cutting the number of U.S. nuclear warheads and removing some missiles from hair-trigger status and said that he would do this unilaterally if necessary. Sounds bold but there's a slight catch. It seems that in 1995 his fellow Republicans in Congress enacted legislation prohibiting the president from removing more missiles from constant alert or from unilaterally eliminating nuclear warheads below the 6,000 level set by the START treaty.

So here we have another area like education where whatever good ideas the governor may have are unlikely to be supported by congressional Republicans. They are not going to be happy with him until he hairs over and reverts to his Bob Jones self.

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AS I READ A REVIEW BY ANNA Kisselgoff that appeared in *The New York Times* of June 3, it occurred to me that I may have been insufficiently attentive to recent developments in the world of dance. In case you too have been guilty of not following this art form as closely as you might, let me bring you up to speed with a quote from the review:

"Thus a provocative image of fully clothed men pulling their penises and women jiggling their breasts to the beat of James Lo's score suddenly looks playful."

That sentence described a piece called "Excessories." Next comes "Fort Blossom," of which Kisselgoff writes:

"The contrast between the clothed women and nude men is furthered by the delineated movement of the women and the more spontaneous look of the men's wrestling style. In their implied coupling, the men sandwich a plastic pillow between their bodies as they lie on top of each other. The women's courtship is more subtle: they lie face down and one woman's foot imperceptibly crosses over the other's calf. The merging of the two pairs in a martial arts finale results in an abrupt ending. 'Fort Blossom' suggests an uninhibited search for a new direction, not yet defined."

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I WAS TROUBLED TO LEARN that *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* had all agreed to a deal offered them by a United Airlines publicist that did not, to put it gently, seem to be in the public interest. The three papers were to get exclusive details on the $5 billion merger with US Airways so

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long as they agreed not to seek comment from outsiders. This virtually guaranteed that the initial stories would be free of the negative comment that might come from consumer groups and competitors. I'm sure the news organizations would have ultimately printed these critical comments but the first impression is important and it was going to be positive to neutral and definitely not negative under this deal.

This is, unfortunately, not an isolated case of a misjudgment in favor of business. According to a study by the Pew Research Center, one-third of journalists say they have sometimes let their news judgment be affected by the business interest of their organization or an advertiser.

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IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN following the low-flow toilet debate, on one side are the dedicated water conservers who favor the 1.6-gallon flush and on the other are those who object to the increase in stopped-up toilets that low-flow flushing produces.

There is a neoliberal solution to this problem recognized by one of our readers who recently visited Australia. Down Under, he reports, "All the toilets I saw had a two-stage pull handle that when pulled to the first stop flushed at low-flow the liquids and light stuff. There was also a second pull stop available that gave a big flush to the really big loads. Thus, water was conserved 90 percent of the time."

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RECENTLY A LETTER ARRIVED at my house at 5025 V. St. Washington, D.C. It was addressed to 5025 Campstool Rd. in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The zip code was 32007. Mine is 20007. The addressee was the Sierra Trading Post. The only addressees here are Charles and Elizabeth Peters. The only thing these addresses have in common is the last three digits of the zip-code and the street number 5025. Can anyone out there explain how this could have happened?

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THE NATIONAL COMMISSION on Terrorism has proposed that we monitor the activities of all foreign students in the United States. Exactly what would we be looking for? Well, the commission says, the student may change his major from, say, "English literature to nuclear physics." I must say that seems to me to be more likely to produce bad grades than terrorist bombs.

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IN ITS OBITUARY OF SIR JOHN Gielgud, *The New York Times* says that after World War II, "He returned to the United States in 1947 with 'The Lady's Not for Burning.'" This omits one of the great wonders of the New York theater—Gielgud's production earlier in 1947 of "The Importance of Being Earnest." Its success with Pamela Brown as Gwendolyn, led to Gielgud's return later that year with Brown as the star of "Burning." Gielgud's New York "Earnest" was different because it cast Margaret Rutherford as Lady Bracknell instead of Miss Prism, the role she usually played in London as she did in the Michael Redgrave film. In the movie, Lady Bracknell was played by Dame Edith Evans, who had often performed the role on the London stage. Rutherford's performance was a triumph. Never have I heard such delighted laughter in a theater. Her reading of Wilde's great lines—"To be born—or at any rate bred—in a handbag seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to"—was much more spirited than Evans'. Similarly, Brown brought more vigor to Gwendolyn than Joan Greenwood did in the film where, like Evans, Greenwood tended toward languor. The result was the brisk pace comedy needs to work best.

This was an incredible era in the theater. Just the three years from 1946 to 1949 while I was in college at Columbia, saw the original productions of "The Iceman Cometh," "Born Yesterday," "Annie Get Your Gun," "Brigadoon," "A Street Car Named Desire," "South Pacific," "Death of a Salesman," and "Kiss Me Kate." Of all of these, none seemed as perfect to me as Gielgud's "Earnest."

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REMEMBER RICHARD PRESTON'S *The Hot Zone*, that nightmarish book a few years back that posed the possibility of some horrible disease escaping from the Army's biological weapons defense center at Fort Detrick, Md.? Well, buried on an inside page of a recent *Washington Post* was this tidbit: "A review of lab safety procedures is underway at ... Fort Detrick, Md., after a scientist contracted a rare and potentially deadly disease, officials said yesterday."

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THIS COLUMN USED TO regularly feature items about the tendency of public officials to find reasons to travel to nice places at taxpayer expense. But after several readers complained that I had beaten this horse nearly to death, I desisted. But I find I can't resist a recent story from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* about the travel records of the city's pension board. Why, one might ask, would the members of a pension board have to go anywhere? Yet, according to the *Journal Sentinel*, "Six of the eight members have traveled to conferences in locales such as Phoenix, Palm Springs, Orlando, Las Vegas, and New Orleans—with several making more than one trip." *The Monthly*'s answer to official travel abuse is to require

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that all conferences be held in Buffalo or Toledo.

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YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT financial institutions often ask for your mother's maiden name to verify that you are in fact you before they hand over your money. Well *Wired* magazine reports that a firm called Geneology.com is now offering a way for anyone who might want your money to find out your mother's name by searching your family tree on its 470-million-name database. So what's going to happen when you decide you need to move further away from Fort Detrick and go to the bank to withdraw your funds? Will somebody else have gotten there first, recited your mother's maiden name, and cleaned out your account?

Given the moral decay of the legal profession, it is laughable to single out Bill Clinton for disbarment.

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THE WIDELY SHARED DISMAY AT Al Gore's inadequacies as a candidate should not obscure the many admirable qualities he would bring to the presidency, qualities that are not nearly so evident in George W. Bush. There is little in W.'s life to compare with Gore's long history of deep interest in public issues and of taking positions on those issues that consistently reflect a conscientious and thoughtful mind. Gore's awkwardness on the stump may keep him from being elected, but, if he is, I'm convinced he would be a good president.

He is not helped by the tendency of reporters to focus on style instead of substance. This of course makes Gore look bad but it also doesn't exactly flatter the reporters themselves. Take the recent column by Maureen Dowd ridiculing Gore's long-winded answers to questions by the editorial board of *The New York Times*. Gore's answers to the first two questions were definitely not impressive. But neither were the questions:

"Q. Your opponent, not so much on his vulnerability on the issues, but just as a candidate, is he—do you find that he has strengths you didn't anticipate or is he competitive down to the wire?"

"Q. We asked you to categorize your opponent. Just drawing on what you've said so far, I think—how about, are you saying the ant versus the grasshopper here, or are you saying wasteful and profligate versus prudent and cautious? Or what labels—how would you do it?"

There may be the faintest hint of coherence in these questions, but not of substance. The reason Gore's answers may have rattled around could be that he was in a state of shock that America's most distinguished editorial board couldn't do better than this. By the way, once the questions focused on substance Gore's answers were pretty good.

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ONE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS with money in politics is that it often comes from out of state. Thus a senator can attract more contributions from people who don't live in his state than from his own constituents. Of course, the out-of-state contributors may merely be citizens who are so public-spirited that they contribute not only to their own representatives but also to worthy senators and congressmen from other states. The suspicion lingers, however, that the contributions may be motivated by a desire to gain influence. And it doesn't seem right for non-constituents to have influence. The problem extends to state legislatures. Sixty-six percent of the $100 or more donations to the Wisconsin state senators re-elected in 1998 came from outside their home districts according to the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. What's even more suspicious is how the percentage grows in proportion to the power of the recipient. Ninety-six percent of the money contributed to Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen came from out-of-district.

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ANOTHER INDEPENDENT COUNSEL has failed to indict a Clinton cabinet member. Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman has been cleared by independent counsel Ralph I. Lancaster Jr. How false a picture the press has painted as it depicted the Clinton administration as scandal-ridden. No indictment of Bruce Babbitt. No indictment of the Clintons in Whitewater, Filegate, or Travelgate. The only charges that have stuck concern lies by Bill Clinton and Henry Cisneros about sex, not about their public duties.

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ONE OF THE MOST MADDENING aspects of our test-mad culture is that the tests don't evaluate some of the most important human traits—judgment, wisdom, and character. At last someone's trying to do something about this problem. The University of Michigan Business School is, reports David Leonhardt of *The New York Times*, designing a test to measure practical intelligence or common sense. The test, according to Leonhardt, "aims to gauge who is able to learn from mistakes, handle changing situations and cope with less-than-perfect information."

But even this test should not eliminate the need for thorough personal interviews of the applicant and, whenever possible, his references to determine if he has the aforementioned qualities plus, what is probably most important of all, a sense of humor.

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THE CLEVELAND CLINIC HAS one of the best heart surgery records in the country. Robert

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Bazell of "NBC Nightly News" recently looked into the reasons for that success. One factor is volume. The Clinic heart-surgery team knows what it's doing because it does 4,000 open-heart surgeries a year. Another is teamwork—like the New York Yankees or the Cleveland Indians, says the chief surgeon, Dr. Toby Cosgrove: "You have to have chemistry that works together, and people who are going to get along." All the people on the team work not on the basis of a fee for each operation, but for a salary.

"The situation that we have here is we're all employees of the Cleveland Clinic," says Dr. Cosgrove. "I have never sent a bill. I don't know whether patients are wealthy or whether they're poor. I look after them regardless."

From the time I was in an army hospital during World War II and received excellent care from doctors and nurses who were also on salary and who also didn't know whether I was rich or poor, I have believed that this is the way medicine should be organized.

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IF NEW YORKERS CONFUSE Gov. George Pataki with a television star, it's understandable. The governor is all over the tube. This is not because of excessive coverage of his official activities by news organizations. It is because state agencies have made him the star of five different television campaigns. In one ad for which the state has spent $8 million, Pataki is shown surrounded by happy children of all races next to the state health commissioner, who as Richard Pérez-Peña of *The New York Times* puts it, "happens to be one of the few women, and the only Hispanic, among the administration's top officials." In recent years I have noticed other governors use taxpayer-financed ads, often purporting to promote tourism, as a means of self-promotion. But Pataki has clearly taken this hustle to new heights.

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CONSIDERING THE OVERALL moral decay of the American legal profession, it is laughable that Bill Clinton is being singled out for disbarment. Compared to some offenses that have gotten other lawyers disbarred recently—from selling crack, to hit-and-run, to hiring a hitman to murder an ex-client—Clinton's lie about Monica Lewinsky seems almost trivial. That being said, I'm still appalled that the President's attorney is using the defense that Clinton's denial of sexual relations with Lewinsky was technically accurate. David Kendall has an often deserved reputation as a brilliant attorney but this defense is just plain wrong. The only proper defense would admit that Clinton lied but explain the very understandable reasons for the lie. This is essentially what Dale Bumpers did on the floor of the Senate. It was persuasive then and it would be persuasive now to any judge who is also a human being.

The Monthly's answer to official travel abuse is to require that all conferences be held in Buffalo or Toledo.

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THE LATEST CRIMINAL justice outrage: The suspected killer of five people at a New York Wendy's was free on bail at the time of the murders. He had confessed to armed robbery but was let out of jail on bail of only $3,500 even though prosecutors had requested $100,000.

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IN AFRICA, SOME 300,000 people are infected with sleeping sickness each year. It's a disease that may sound benign, but its victims suffer horribly before they die. They hallucinate and their skin becomes so sensitive that they cry out at the touch of water. The drug that is the most effective treatment for the disease is no longer available because its manufacturer determined that it was unprofitable.

This, points out Donald McNeil Jr. of *The New York Times*, is a grave problem for Africa. Pharmaceutical companies have no reason to produce drugs that don't make money. And the vast majority of Africans can't afford to pay for the drugs that they need.

The drug companies devote their research to products that can sell. They would, their critics contend, "rather find a cure for a bald American than a dying African." When McNeil asked a spokesman for a French pharmaceutical company if this statement was true, the spokesman replied, "That's not completely wrong. We know what's happening in the third world, but we don't act. We're an industry in a competitive environment—we have a commitment to deliver performance for shareholders."

This is another reason I'm driven around the bend by those who believe that the solution of the world's health problems can be left to the private sector. Obviously, it is going to take the intervention of governments and of international organizations to solve this problem. The profit motive just isn't going to do the job.

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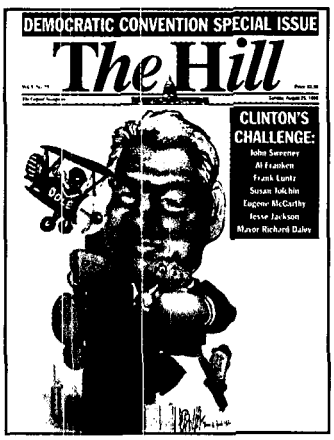
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Loosening the Golden Handcuffs

Why selling our gold reserves is fiscally sound and environmentally correct

BY DANNY KENNEDY

PICTURE YOURSELF AT THE BOTTOM of a pit the size of the Grand Canyon. Huge trucks rumble past taking 40-ton loads of rock to a mill. There, the rock is crushed into a fine powder, piled into a pyramid and sprayed with a cyanide solution—the same sort of poison that was used to kill people at San Quentin until the mid-1990s. The run-off is collected and strained for tiny flakes of gold—they are literally microscopic—and the mound of crushed earth is left there. A handful of men operate the machines, and the ore body of this mine will be depleted in a few years, forcing the company to move on to excavate another site. Welcome to the gold-mining industry—one of the most environmentally damaging and wasteful businesses in the world.

Now, teleport yourself across the country to a vault under the streets of Manhattan. Here the U.S. Federal Reserve holds more than 8,000 tons of gold—around four times annual global production and more gold than is thought to be in all the mines of the United States. Most of this gold belongs to the Federal Reserve—the rest of our holdings are in Fort Knox and other safe places—some is kept in trust for governments around the world. So when you read about France selling Switzerland some bullion, there's a New Yorker with a hand trolley carting gold bars across a room under Wall Street.

Why hold all this gold? The reason is partly historical. Until 1971, the U.S. government was at the hub of an international gold exchange system. Central banks that held dollars in their reserves could present them to Uncle Sam and walk away with gold at $35 an ounce. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. hit an inflationary patch and Richard Nixon feared a run on our gold stocks—so he put an end to the exchange system. He didn't get rid of the gold though, and even now it constitutes 54 percent of our nation's foreign exchange reserves. Gold has not been the greatest investment: It hasn't done as well as, say, the stock market—and it might have been put to better financial use buying back government debt. Yet the mandarins of the Federal Reserve cling to it for fear of offending supply-side economists, an ambiguous concern for how financial markets will react, and other "quasi-religious reasons," according to Yale University economist William Nordhaus. And perhaps more important, it is also a hedge against doomsday. As Alan Greenspan testified to Congress in 1999: "Gold still represents the ultimate form of payment in the world. Germany in 1944 could buy materials only with gold. Gold is always accepted."

Although this suggests that it may be good to have some gold around, it's pretty thin reasoning for holding a majority of the country's foreign exchange reserves in an underperforming asset. And it's downright maddening when you consider that by hoarding gold the Fed creates scarcity in the market, drives gold to an artificially high price, and gives companies incentives to dig up and spray cyanide on valuable land to extract virgin ore. And don't forget what this ore is used for. Eighty percent gets turned into jewelry not too long after it is extracted. Yes, some goes to women in South Asia who are not allowed other forms of wealth by the patriarchy, but most gold is pried from the

DANNY KENNEDY *is the Director of Project Underground, a California-based non-profit organization that works on mining issues.*

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earth at great ecological and social cost just so kids can have chunky class rings, and you and I can avow our love to our partners.

So here's a recommendation: Sell the Fed's gold reserves. Instead of making jewelry by opening the ground, make it by opening the vaults. Putting the Fed's bullion on the market would protect the environment from the wounds created by gold mining. It would save our communities the costs of tending those wounds. And at the end of the day, if we manage the process correctly, it could make us a good bit of money too.

A Fine Mess

Mark Twain quipped that the definition of a gold mine is a hole in the ground owned by a liar. He actually underestimated the deception of the public given that mines are part of an industry that leaves a festering series of open sores, frequently scarring sacred landscapes of indigenous peoples and feeding social problems.

It sounds like a harsh generalization, but even in the environmentally regulated United States most of the contemporary gold mines are massive holes in the earth, draining aquifers, clearing landscape and habitat, and requiring huge quantities of sodium cyanide to be sprayed on crushed ore. Over a decade ago the Environmental Protection Agency was asked to name the three biggest threats to national security from an environmental perspective—they found them to be climate change, ozone depletion, and water contamination from old mines. With 500,000 abandoned shafts and pits pocking the United States, this is no exaggeration—and the gold mining industry is responsible for most of these.

Under the still-standing 1872 General Mining Act, gold miners can patent federal lands for $5 dollars an acre. This has contributed to a legacy of historic mining—from the refining of mercury-laden silt in San Francisco Bay, to the denial of indigenous land rights and desecration of sacred spaces in the Black Hills of South Dakota—that is certainly a problem. But what is worse is the impact of the modern mining industry which, through the use of huge Tonka trucks and cyanide, can make profitable mines out of very low-grade ores. This results in a six-foot by six-foot by 10-foot pile of toxic waste rock for every pair of gold rings sold on the open market. And when it's clean up time, the costs are often externalized on the community that hosted the mine. In 1997, Pegasus Gold mining corporation, a Canadian company, abandoned the Zortman-Landusky mine after a series of cyanide spills and other pollution problems. They left Montana with a $100-million clean-up bill—but only a $30-million bond.

Due to the rare nature of gold, the extraction of it also results in the largest waste stream per unit of product compared to other kinds of mining. The U.S. gold industry has an ore-to-waste ratio averaging one part to three million, and the sheer volume of waste rock dwarfs municipal garbage production. What is more, this year's Toxic Release Inventory published by the EPA calculates that 48 percent of all toxic waste is generated by the hard-rock-mining industry, in which gold is the major player. The United States is still the second largest producer of gold, producing about 10 percent of global output, with most of it coming from Nevada.

In Nevada, there are about 75 productive mines, mostly concentrated in the northeastern quarter of the state, on the lands of the Western Shoshone nation. To give you a sense of the problems created in Nevada by gold mining, two dozen of these mines are on the scale of the Berkeley pit—an abandoned copper mine in Butte, Mont., which has become the largest superfund site in the United States and will most likely result in the relocation of that city. These are mile-wide, mile-deep holes in the ground with massive ancillary industry and huge piles of waste rock littering the region and affecting the ecosystem and agriculture of the Silver State.

Gold Goes Global

The Wall Street Journal reported on the Nevada industry earlier this year and concluded that the biggest problem there is the "dewatering" caused by the mines. As the mines are dug deeper and deeper, ground water has to be pumped out of the pits. This water is poured on the desert floor or allowed to leave the area via a few local streams, such as the Humboldt River. Currently the gold industry consumes more water than all the people in Nevada—clearly an unsustainable long-term proposition in a place that is classified as a desert. Scientists recently found that the groundwater level has dropped by more than 1,000 feet in a decade in some places—the most serious depletion of an aquifer in the world.

Richard Parks, chair of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) which organizes communities in 10 states increasingly in response to the threat of gold mining and exploration, believes firmly that the whole business needs some re-evaluation. "All this gold is squirreled away in the central banks, and acts as a subsidy supporting pollution of our water

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and destruction of our communities around the world and here in the West." WORC and other groups in Montana led a citizen initiative in the last election that bans cyanide-based gold mining in the state, a move currently being copied by activists in Colorado.

Civil society groups are trying to ensure that this does not become a NIMBY—"not-in-my-backyard"—solution since the problems evident in Nevada, Montana, Alaska, and Idaho are replicated and magnified by the gold-mining industry throughout the world. In northern Peru for example, at Latin America's largest gold mine, Newmont Corporation has come to be seen as a latter day Conquistador by the *campesinos* who live in the area. This huge mine is partly owned by the World Bank, which somehow justifies its stake in the name of poverty alleviation.

Newmont, which pioneered cyanide heap-leaching and has a stake in about 50 percent of the mines in Nevada, came to the gold-rich mountains around the ancient city of Cajamarca promising progress and no problems. Instead the campesinos have had their sacred mountains excavated, their water sources contaminated, and their lifestyle destroyed by the mine. Newmont has also taken its stock and trade to Indonesia where it operates two enormous mines, which dump their wastes at sea. This is a practice—known as submarine tailings disposal—which the company would never get away with here in the U.S. Newmont makes its profit by externalizing these costs and selling its gold at a price inflated by the fact that a bunch of useless bullion lies unused in the bowels of the Fed in Manhattan.

Welcome to the gold-mining industry—one of the most environmentally damaging and wasteful businesses in the world.

Good Buy Gold?

The wisdom of continued growth by the cyanide-based gold-mining industry is being increasingly challenged from an unlikely quarter—economists themselves. First there is the fact, as already discussed, that central banks and a handful of other institutions hold more than 33,000 tons of gold—around 15 times annual mine production. These reserves could satisfy gold demand for eight years at current rates.

But more compelling to the number crunchers than these arguments for material efficiency is the reality that gold reserves are diminishing in value. The United States' stocks have devalued according to market prices from $215 billion in 1980 to $73 billion now. An economist at the Union Bank Switzerland estimated in late 1997 that the average Swiss household could earn more than $450 per year if the government were to invest its gold holdings in foreign-government bonds. If all nations' gold reserves were sold and the investment switched into bonds they would earn $20 billion per annum. Instead, gold bullion gathers dust and depreciates. Given the bull market of recent years imagine what earnings could have been generated by the Fed if it had invested just a portion in almost anything else.

In June 1997, the U.S. Federal Reserve Board went so far as to publish a discussion paper that suggested governments would be much better off if all countries sold their gold immediately. It pointed out that the U.S. government would benefit substantially if it sold, especially if it sold early—before sales by other nations significantly lowered the metal's value. One of the paper's central arguments was that it was economically inefficient to continue to mine gold when bullion held in the nation's vaults is available. While selling our gold stocks might lead to a decrease in the value of gold, the corresponding decrease in cost would actually increase the total welfare "by $368 billion because ... inefficiencies are eliminated." The sale would also benefit industries that utilize gold (such as electronics and jewelry) because the removal of inefficiency costs leads to more net profit.

The paper did not come to represent government policy, according to one Fed official, because the sale of gold would "upset the market." Economists like Yale's Nordhaus don't place a whole lot of weight on this concern. Yes, the gold market would experience some tumult, but it is certainly not clear why this should bring the financial markets crashing down. Silver was also once a metal that was traded as currency and held in reserve against the value of the dollar. It was imbued with some of the same cultural and political value as gold is now. The world did not end when we decided to sell it on the open market and treat it like any other commodity—although the drop in prices

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did hurt several rich silver-mining firms.

Meanwhile, many investment analysts are terming gold "the duddest of dud investments." Nearly a decade ago *The Economist* described remaining central bank reserves as the "spent fuel of an obsolete monetary system," but more chilling for gold fans was the release last year of a paper by Lehman Brothers called "Reverse Alchemy." It tracked the accelerating commoditization of gold, and debunked 14 "golden myths" ranging from the notion that gold is a hedge against inflation to the hope that Y2K chaos would drive investors back to the security of gold. Their lack of faith in gold is being adopted by many others, and the hard numbers that they cite (like the fact that an investment made in gold ten years ago has lost 30 percent of its value) are increasingly hard to rebut.

By hoarding gold, the Fed gives companies incentive to spray cyanide on valuable land.

Good Bye Gold?

But will the accumulation of all this evidence be capable of forcing the Fed's hand?

It's hard to say. The whys and wherefores as to our attachment to bullion are many and complex. It's clear enough that Alan Greenspan and other so-called "goldbugs" at the Fed feel more secure knowing the precious metal is there. The U.S. has not sold even an ounce of its bullion since going off the gold standard almost 30 years ago. We haven't even loaned it out—too bad, since these loans could have been awfully profitable while the asset was spiraling from its $800-per-ounce high to its current value of about $290.

In addition, the gold-mining companies are cagey political operatives, as they have shown in the European market. When it came time for the new European financial order to sort out its reserves situation, there was much lobbying by the industry to ensure members of the European Union did not sell their bullion. Despite this pressure, the new European Central Bank (ECB) decided to set its holdings at 15 percent—a mere fraction of the amount being held by Greenspan's gang. As a result of these deliberations, members of the EU and those outside it started to see an advantage in selling sooner, before the price per ounce was deflated by a flood on the market. England broke ranks early to sell 400 tons last May.

Around the same time, the Swiss started to maneuver to sell some of their reserves, even though they were constitutionally bound to hang on to gold. The first step was to hold a referendum to amend their constitution and become the last country to sever the link between their currency and gold reserves. Then, the International Monetary Fund moved to sell 320 tons of gold—10 percent of its holdings and more than all the gold that goes into electronics and industrial applications in a year—and was endorsed to do so by the Group of Seven. All of a sudden it seemed that the market would be awash in bullion.

With an apparent run on the market pending, and the price plummeting, the gold-mining industry became nervous. It began bringing miners and others who would be affected by a depressed price—most notably multi-millionaires like CEO Ronald Cambre of Newmont—to plead their case with central bank decision makers. They were begging that the banks not divest their gold holdings lest it expose them to the reality of market forces—a hard sell in these days of laissez-faire capitalism, but one which they won by playing a race card. Bringing representatives of the South African workforce to the table, they begged not to forsake these hard-working men by making their mines unprofitable. In September, the ECB and a group of European countries—but not the United States—agreed in the so-called "Washington Agreement" to limit gold sales over the next five years to 2,000 tons.

But the industry may have been more successful at the negotiating table than in the real world. Since the Washington Agreement was signed nine months ago, the Netherlands has announced it will sell 300 tons, the Swiss 120 tons, and the British have continued their 20-ton auctions that brought on the negotiations in the first place. This far exceeds the pace of sales that the governments committed to, but the industry is putting a brave face on it. In the UK, the World Gold Council is trying to spawn a revolt against the Chancellor of the Exchequer and has so far garnered 70,000 signatures decrying the practice. But Tony Blair's government seems determined to lower its

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holdings to less than 10 percent of its total asset base while the price of gold is still relatively high.

Back To The Future

Cleaning up mines, retraining workers, and regulating the flow of bullion into the market will require significant planning and cooperation by regulators, communities, workers, and—to whatever extent possible—industry. The solution to many of the problems will be to start selling gold reserves, and to use some of the proceeds to clean up abandoned mines and retrain workers retrenched from the sector. For example, one could set aside some sales proceeds to create a remediation fund for Nevada's cyanide-strewn landscape—just as taxes are garnered from coal export for the employment of citizens in the clean-up of coalfields. Labor issues also need to be handled delicately: In particular, a special fund will need to be set up to pay for a fair transition for the South African economy out of its reliance on gold mining and especially for the hundreds of thousands of men sent down three-mile shafts daily to dig for gold. In addition, a global scheme would be necessary to titrate sales with the ability of the market to absorb the surplus gold and create sufficient income to please the public and pay for some of the negative consequences.

The transition would have its challenges, but it would be well worth it. The sooner we do it, the better—not just because the market price will probably continue to drop as other countries liquidate their reserves, but also because the longer we hold onto it the longer gold-mining companies dump their cyanide on our land in the hopes of finding specks of metal that ultimately end up as decoration. At last our society could step away from this filthy lucre and move into a non-golden age of rational economic policy.

Research assistance provided by Michael Gerber.

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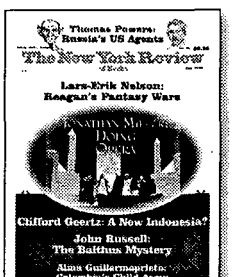

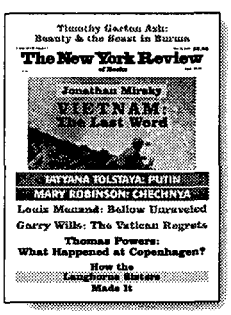

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Canada's Burning!

Media myths about universal health coverage

BY THEODORE MARMOR AND KIP SULLIVAN

LAST WINTER'S FLU EPIDEMIC OVERwhelmed emergency rooms across North America. Patients trapped in uncomfortable conditions were forced to wait for long periods of time before finally getting treatment. It was an ugly situation and the American press dutifully reported the winding lines, the cold drafts, and the screaming drug addicts adjacent to the people suffering from the flu. But their reporting of the situation in Canada and the situation in the United States was dramatically different.

The three major reports on Canada, by *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *ABC News*, used the overcrowding problem as evidence that Canada's universal health insurance program was critically flawed. The problems of Canadian emergency rooms, in short, indicted Canada's medicare. The two major reports on the problem in the United States, by *USA Today* and *Time* magazine, did not, however, turn overcrowding in American ERs into an indictment of America's non-universal health insurance system.

This contrast in press coverage cannot be attributed to obviously better conditions in American emergency rooms. Emergency rooms in both the United States and Canada have come under increasing stress over the last decade and, although there's no rigorous data on ER overcrowding, the data we do have suggest conditions are as bad, if not worse, in the United States. What the disparity does reflect is a tendency among American reporters to state or imply that Canada's increasingly intense debate about its universal health insurance program is evidence that its program is in "crisis" and that universal, government-financed health insurance programs are bound to fail.

THEODORE MARMOR *is the author of* The Politics of Medicare *and a Yale professor.* KIP SULLIVAN *writes frequently about health policy.*

Breaking the News

The *USA Today* and *Time* articles presented vivid evidence that in parts of the United States the condition of the ER is already putting Americans at risk. *Time* reported that patients entering the Thunderbird Samaritan Medical Center near Phoenix last December waited "for up to six hours to see a doctor." In Los Angeles, "for nearly 10 days in December," according to *USA Today*, "60 of the [city's] 81 ERs were so full that hospital administrators asked to send ambulances elsewhere." The *USA Today* story quoted a Boston paramedic saying: "When we get to a hospital, we either have to wait with the patient on a stretcher or we are told on the radio, 'No, you can't come to this hospital.'" The articles explicitly attributed some of the overcrowding directly to the flu epidemic.

The journalistic portrait of Canadian ERs was similarly and deservedly dire. But the conclusion drawn wasn't simply that some Canadian ERs could be overwhelmed by events like the flu epidemic. The three reports on Canadian ERs either ignored the flu or dismissed it as an excuse used by Canadian public officials trying to minimize "the crisis." The problem was really our northern neighbor's universal health insurance program.

Steven Pearlstein of *The Washington Post* quoted unnamed "experts" to the effect that Canada's system is doomed. "Most academic experts," wrote Pearlstein, "say that while more money might alleviate the shortage of advanced machinery, hospital beds, and medical school slots, it will only be a matter of time before the demand for medical services once again overtakes the willingness of voters to pay for it." Pearlstein then quoted a Canadian "professor of health administration" who claimed "the big problem" is that "Canada has un-managed care," implying that Canada could avoid the apocalypse predicted by Pearlstein if it would import the techniques of managed care from the United States.

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What Pearlstein did not say is that Canada is spending far less of its national income on health care than the United States is, that polls indicate Canadian voters want to spend more money on health care, and that in all countries with national health-insurance programs, doctors and other health-care professionals justify their demands for medical care with claims of critical shortages—a tactic known as "orchestrated outrage." Under these circumstances it is easy to find an "expert" who claims to foresee catastrophe; pending disaster is a great way to justify increased funding.

James Brooke, covering the flu outbreak for *The New York Times*, asserted that "few Canadians would recommend their system as a model for export," citing a tangential poll that actually only suggested that Canadians wanted the government to make health care a "top priority," and ignoring other polls that show that the vast majority of Canadians support their national health-insurance program. Brooke seemed to argue that Canada's whole "system" stands indicted by the reported problems its ERs were having during

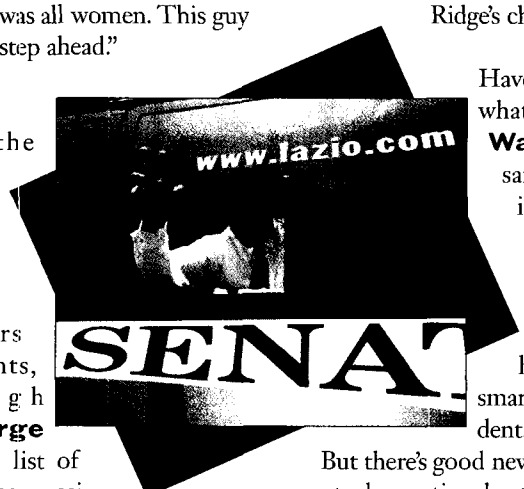
Who's Who

"[**Al Gore**] tries too hard to be perfect," writes **Gail Sheehy** in a recent *New York Times* op-ed. Apparently, his mother, **Pauline**, once feared he would not try hard enough. Speaking of **Donna Armistead**, who became Gore's Carthage girlfriend when he was 13 and she was 16, and whom the family doctor remembers as a "good-looking girl running around the house," **Mrs. Gore** once exclaimed, "Ohmigod, she's going to get pregnant, I know it," reveals **Melinda Henneberger** in another *Times* article.

Only one member of **Ronald Reagan**'s cabinet served the entire eight years of his administration. The last president before Reagan to serve two full terms was **Dwight Eisenhower**, and only one member of his cabinet stuck it out. By contrast, four of **Bill Clinton**'s cabinet are on track to make it to January 20: **Bruce Babbitt, Janet Reno, Richard Riley**, and **Donna Shalala**.

A few years ago, **Rick Lazio**'s "looks got him named most attractive House member by a group of gay congressional staff," according to *The Washington Post*'s **John F. Harris** and **Juliet Eilperin**.

Lest anyone think Lazio coveted this honor, we hasten to add this explanation of why Lazio was one of the first men to enter formerly all-female Vassar, given by a high school friend to **Greg Sargent** and **Josh Benson** of the *New York Observer*: "It was all women. This guy was always a step ahead."



Tom Ridge, the Roman Catholic governor of Pennsylvania who favors abortion rights, ranks high on **George W. Bush**'s list of potential vice presidents, according to many informed observers. He is a former union member—he joined the hod-carriers when he worked in construction during college—and he is a combat veteran of Vietnam. "In two elections, Mr. Ridge has shown considerable crossover attraction among Democratic voters," writes **Frances X. Clines** of *The New York Times*. "He has the power to garner up to 30 percent of them, according to polls." The knock on him, according to Pennsylvania Democrats, is that his recent tax cut "favored big business at the expense of needy families."

But a bigger knock in **W.**'s eyes may be the fact that Ridge *is* bigger. At a powerfully built 6'3" he would dwarf Bush on the platform. Just the mental picture of **Michael Dukakis** standing next to **Lloyd Bentsen** may be enough to doom Ridge's chances.

Have you heard what Rep. **J. C. Watts** once said when he introduced **George W. Bush**? "You don't have to be smart to be president."

But there's good news for **W.** in a recent observation by the *New York Post*'s **Deborah Orin**: "Worth noting: It's a well-established fact that most reporters vote Democratic. So one of the most intriguing side points of the 2000 campaign is that the political press corps now seems to be tilted toward Bush." For further evidence to support Orin, see **Robert Parry**'s article in our April issue.

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a bad flu season, at a holiday period where staff falls as much as 30 percent according to studies cited by the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Although Pearlstein and Brooke based their indictments of Canada's universal health insurance on "expert" and "popular" opinion, Deborah Amos of *ABC News* was not so cautious. In her Feb. 3 report from Toronto for *ABC*'s evening news, Amos averred that the "problem [of ER overcrowding in Canada] goes back a decade to when the Canadian government ... recognized that universal care was inefficient and expensive" and drastically cut the Ontario health-care budget. Amos offered no study and quoted no expert in support of this statement. This is not surprising because the portion of her statement in quotes is palpably false. Canadian "universal care" is not, by any reasonable comparative standard, "inefficient" and the "Canadian government" has never said or implied it was.

Like Pearlstein and Brooke, Amos forgot to place American and Canadian performance in a comparative context. She failed to tell her audience (or did not

NIMBY is not only dividing neighbors and communities, it is driving a wedge between formerly strong political allies. From mid-1998 to **Bill Clinton**'s victory in last year's impeachment trial, **Greg Craig** and **Charles Ruff** were united in their dedicated defense of the president. What has torn these pals asunder? Craig moved **Elian Gonzalez** into an estate in Ruff's neighborhood. According to *The Washington Post*'s **Lloyd Grove**, **Sue Ruff**, the wife of guess who, "started canvassing the 'hood yesterday after barricades appeared on the estate—which receives a D.C. tax break in return for permitting public access—and prevented her from walking her dog on the grounds."

Speaking of Cuba, "**Tom DeLay**, who championed the China free trade bill, is drawing fire from Republican colleagues, as well as Democrats, for his efforts to thwart a vote on lifting sanctions on Cuba." Thus reports *The Hill*'s **Allison Stevens** who also notes that the effort, opposed by DeLay, to lift the food and medicine sanctions on Cuba is led by **George Nethercutt** in the House and by **Byron Dorgan**, **John Ashcroft**, and **Slade Gorton** in the Senate.

Bad news for Asia, Africa, and Latin America. **Condoleezza Rice**, **George W.**'s chief foreign affairs advisor, describes herself as "Europeanist." Her first love was Russian history. Her first book was on the Czechoslovakian army. And her most notable book was on German reunification.

Bad news for **Al Gore**. According to pollsters **Peter Hart** and **Molly O'Rourke**, voter confidence in a candidate's ability to keep the economy strong and growing, which you would expect to be a plus for the vice president, is stronger for **George W. Bush**—31 to 27 per cent. It has declined for both men since December when Bush led 43 to 36 percent.

The good news for Gore is that he is not behind in the general voter preference polls as much as was **Daddy Bush** in 1988 or was **Ronald Reagan** in 1980 at a comparable point in their ultimately victorious campaigns against **Michael Dukakis** and **Jimmy Carter**.

If **Al Gore** loses, he will have the consolation of knowing that his future is financially secure. He will have a pension, based on his service in the Senate and House and as vice president, that will be at least $90,000 a year and, like other federal pensions, will increase with inflation. He also owns real estate and other assets worth more than $1 million. And as **Ron Insana** of *Money* magazine reminds us, "he's the only surviving child of a widowed mother with a multimillion-dollar estate."

Did you know that **George W. Bush** once defeated a candidate who later defeated **Bill Clinton**? The election was for seventh grade class president. Bush won a narrow victory over **Jack Hanks**—no, we don't know if he's related to the movie star—who years later beat Clinton in a contest for the vice presidency of Boys Nation.

If you seek a job on the next administration's national security team or if you're simply a foreign policy buff, here are the key advisors that have emerged in the **Al Gore** and **George W. Bush** campaigns. Among the Gore group are **Leon Fuerth**—see last month's Who's Who—**Richard Holbrooke**, **James Sasser**, **Laura D'Andrea Tyson**, **Robert Hunter**, **Richard Gardner**, **Mel Levine**, **Joan Spero**, **Ashton Carter**, **Bruce Jentleson**, **Marc Ginsberg**, and **Graham Allison**. On the Republican side are **Condoleezza Rice**, **George Shultz**, **Richard Cheney**, **Dov Zakheim**, **Robert Zoellick**, **Richard Perle**, **Paul Wolfowitz**, **Richard Armitage**, **Stephen Hadley**, and **Robert Blackwill**.

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know) that Canada insured 100 percent of its citizens for $2,250 per person in 1998 while the United States expended $4,270 per person insuring only 84 percent of our citizens. This oversight was convenient. One would look rather foolish asserting that Canada's medical care costs half what ours does and insures everyone, but is, nonetheless, "inefficient."

The Pattern of Distortion

These three reports weren't the first time that American reporters gave slanted coverage of the Canadian health-care system. In fact, American media coverage of Canada has suffered from two defects for a long time: it is infrequent, and it is often biased. These two problems also, of course, overlap since infrequent coverage is frequently ill-informed.

Canadian medicare has from time to time popped into the American media consciousness, but with precious little background or continuity of coverage. In the early 1970s, for instance, Sen. Edward Kennedy led a posse of politicians and press north to observe the successes of universal health insurance. In 1975, a serious and sustained comparative book was published with the accurate and promising title: *Canadian National Health Insurance: Lessons for the United States.* An academic bestseller in Canada, the book never reached the American journalistic community. The brief upswing in coverage of Canada was followed by a harsh backlash and then, with the stagflation of the 1970s, the domestic policy frustrations of the Carter years, and the conservatism of the Reagan administrations, a long silence ensued. Americans might, by a majority, favor universal insurance and, as the polls showed in the late 1980s, overwhelmingly favor what they thought Canada had. But their preferences forced no action in Congress and consequently stirred little media interest.

In 1989, during a period of economic growth and amidst the new ideas that always come in with a change in presidential administration, there was the typical flurry of inquiring (and occasionally appreciative) television programs, newspaper features, and radio interviews about Canada's medicare. As before, these were soon followed by counter-stories fueled by the same interest groups that would scuttle the debate over President Clinton's health-care plan in 1993. Coverage slacked off after the counterattacks in both 1989 and 1992 and, by 1999, when the failings of the American health-care system began to reappear on our national political agenda, the journalistic community had again fallen out of touch with the Canadian situation. Thus, once again, they became easy prey for the special interest groups aligned against the Canadian system.

Bias

Foreign experience thoughtfully portrayed would help Americans participate intelligently in the great debate about how to reform our medical care arrangements that still leave over 44 million Americans uninsured. Readers would turn to such stories for the same reason they buy *Consumer Reports*: to read about cars, prescription drugs, or other complex consumer items. They are looking for clear-headed and well-informed assessments, not ideological ones. They expect to find in *Consumer Reports* not merely a list of horror stories about car A or car B, antidepressant X or antidepressant Y, but discussion of the available and reliable data, presented in a truly balanced fashion.

Why don't our journalists practice such careful reporting more consistently? What explains their penchant for using a single story to suggest system-wide problems without providing comprehensive supporting evidence? Part of the answer is that they are generalists, not specialists in Canadian (or international) medical care. And there's a well-documented tendency for journalists to look for one hot scandal and then expand it into what they think is a universal point. Reporters tend to ignore scientific or polling data in favor of anecdotes and quotations, and, with rare exceptions (see Ron Winslow's May 9, 1990 article in *The Wall Street Journal*), U.S. reporters do not provide Americans with the comparative data that would help them fairly evaluate the situation. Any reporter writing about Canada needs to understand the context and history of the debate if he wants to be able to offer a level-headed and informative analysis. But American reporters, for the most part, are trained to jump from story to story and speciality to speciality. Just in May, 2000, the *New York Times*' reporter who wrote about Canada's system during the flu epidemic has also written about gun control, immigrants from Kosovo, the history of Montreal, and the impact of a beer commercial on Canadian national identity.

The problem is compounded because the American media are not terribly interested in foreign experience with public policy and, when they turn to such a subject, it is often because American actors are using such experience to praise or blame some domestic U.S. initiative, program, or point of view. Domestic interest groups provide the spur to such stories, and the richest of such groups overwhelmingly want to attack the Canadian model. To the extent American journalists interpret balance and objectivity as quot-

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ing the views of contending parties, the imbalance in what they hear distorts the story they tell.

Precisely because Canada has achieved comparatively good value for money through a government program, it represents an ideological threat to a number of interest groups in the United States. Private health insurance firms play a relatively minor role in Canada, insuring only those services and goods not covered by their medicare. Second, Canadian medicare relies largely on price controls to keep physician fees and drug prices far below those that prevail in the United States. Canada thus poses a threat to the American health insurance industry, to the pharmaceutical industry, and to a substantial portion of the American medical profession. At one time or another, all three groups have conducted lobbying campaigns to discredit Canada's medicare.

In response to proposals by state and federal legislators to limit U.S. drug prices to those that prevail in Canada, the U.S. drug industry recently uncorked the latest anti-Canada disinformation campaign. On March 29, 2000, a drug-industry front group, described without a hint of irony as "Citizens for Better Medicare," launched a multimedia campaign "urging American seniors to reject the Canadian model of health insurance and coverage of prescription drugs." Here is how they pose the issue: "In a system of government price controls, you can't get the price without the government controls," according to Timothy Ryan, the executive director of this campaign. The price Canadians pay, according to Ryan, is enormous and includes controls in a "big government-run sys-

Comparing the United States and Canada: The scientific evidence

Most studies comparing the quality of health care in one country to another rely on a few crude barometers—typically, infant mortality rates, average longevity, and percent of the populace without insurance. By all of these measures, America's health-care system is inferior to Canada's. Our infant mortality rate (the percent of babies who do not survive to their first birthday) was 8.0 per 1,000 live births in 1995, 19th in the industrialized world, while Canada's rate was 6.0 (13th). We ranked 20th in male longevity and 19th in female longevity while Canada ranked fourth in both categories. We insure 84 percent of our citizens; Canada insures 100 percent of hers.

Since 1971, the year Canada completed the phase-in of its single-payer system, approximately 30 scientific studies comparing the quality of medical care in the United States and Canada have appeared. These 30 studies indicate that quality of care in Canada is as good as or better than that in the United States (for Americans who can afford to see a doctor, that is). Here are representative examples of those studies:

- A study conducted jointly by Canadians and Americans found that Canadian mortality rates were lower for eight of 10 types of surgery (including bypass surgery), slightly higher for open prostatectomy, and almost identical for hip fracture repair (Roos et al., *Health Affairs*, 1992);
- A study conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that Canadians are five percent more likely to survive lung cancer than Americans, four percent less likely to survive breast cancer, and equally likely to survive colon cancer and Hodgkin's disease (Gorey et al., *American Journal of Public Health*, 1997);
- A study of the quality of care of patients with end-stage renal disease concluded, "Manitoba patients were more than twice as likely to receive kidney transplants as U.S.... patients. No patients in Manitoba used reprocessed dialyzers, compared with 57 percent of U.S.... patients. After adjustment for all casemix and treatment variables, the mortality rate was 47 percent higher in the United States" (Hornberger et al., *Medical Care*, 1997);
- A 1997 poll of citizens of five nations found that Canadians and Americans were equally likely to say their hospital services are excellent, but that Canadians were more likely to say their physician services are excellent (37 percent) than Americans were (29 percent) (Commonwealth Fund, 1998);
- The average leukemia patient waits nine months for a bone marrow transplant in America versus ten months in Canada (Silberman et al., *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1994);
- A comprehensive study conducted by scholars affiliated with 11 hospitals in Canada and five in the United States found that heart attack patients in the United States were twice as likely to receive heart surgery as heart attack patients in Canada, yet 78 percent of Canadians were still alive 42 months after their heart attack versus 77 percent of Americans (Rouleau et al., *NEJM*, 1993).

Bear in mind that Canada produces health care on a par with ours, and insures all its citizens, with per capita health care expenditures that are merely 50 to 60 percent of ours.

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tem that rations health care, delays access to treatments including new technology and medicines, and harms too many patients." The ad omitted data, such as the statistic reported in the sidebar indicating that "rationing" is far worse in the U.S., and concluded, "if American politicians are going to advocate Canadian-style solutions, then they must be prepared to accept Canadian-style consequences." The ad campaign apparently reflects the judgment of 40 national associations, including such traditional universal health-insurance supporters as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Pharmaceutical trade association. Most journalists aren't going to believe every word that these industry groups say, but there's no organized support on the other side. And when you've got millions of dollars in advertisements telling you something, and no one is rebutting the information, biases start to sneak in.

Myths

American journalists are subjected to more than just anti-Canada mythology from big business and right-wing organizations. These groups also inundate reporters with mythology that is simply anti-government.

The most generic myth is that any government program is by nature more complex and less administratively efficient than its private-sector counterpart. That's true in some cases, but in the case of Canada's medicare program, the reverse is true. Medicare—Canada's great concordat—is simple, but powerful. Canada's health-care system has an overhead of approximately one percent, far below the 15 to 30 percent levels of the private-sector insurance companies that rule the roost in the United States. Canadian provincial governments determine the budget available for medical care (albeit under pressure) and they leave patients and physicians largely to their choices. Hospital beds are tight, but no official from a managed-care firm hundreds of miles away makes judgments about who should and who should not have admission to, or stay in, a hospital. Likewise, the fights over what doctors and nurses should be paid are intense, as they are in every national health-insurance system. But unlike the lonely, invisible struggles of U.S. doctors with their HMO supervisors, Canadian health care professionals do battle with health-care ministries in a highly public, highly organized, and, therefore, highly influential manner.

Patient bills of rights are not on the Canadian political agenda. Why? Because they don't need to be in a system of universal coverage that does not rely on HMOs to control costs. And where legal challenges are being heard in Canadian medicine, they have to do with the regulatory power of government to limit where doctors can practice under full insurance reimbursement, not with micro-management of physician practices.

Universal health insurance is for most Canadians the country's post-war public triumph. It has brought a decent level of care to most citizens and at a price that consumes 40 percent less of Canada's national income than America's. The necessary consequence of Canada's method of cost control—paying for medical care from a single provincial budget, setting budgets for hospitals, and limiting what doctors and drug companies can charge—is regular controversy. That controversy is about how much to spend, on what, for whom, and under what rules of fairness. There is a democratic accountability that is truly astonishing when compared to the impotence of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures to respond to the health-care crisis in the United States. But a necessary condition for accountability of any government program, in any country, is constant media attention, and that's what Canada's medicare gets, and with it the constant claims by Canada's doctors and others that "crises" are imminent or in full bloom. The intense media coverage and the "crisis" talk in turn provides grist for distorted stories by American media.

Just this spring the Canadian Institute for Health Information issued a comprehensive examination of the problems and performance of Canada's health-care system, a document which, if read by reporters, could greatly improve American (and Canadian) understanding of the program. Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be a lot of interest in it. It doesn't have spicy anecdotes, and it's certainly not going to be sent around to newsroom after newsroom by a well-funded special interest group.

That's too bad. There is a real health-care crisis in this country and if America is going to solve it, citizens must understand the differences between democratically controlled and corporate-controlled health-care systems. And if Americans are to understand those differences, reporters must consistently report the whole truth—not little truths, semi-truths, and falsehoods. They must give us a full and fair comparison between Canada's system of universal health insurance and our own. If they did that, the average American would finally be able to understand what we really can learn from Canada. ●

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One Cheer for Soft Money

The case for strong political parties

BY STEVEN E. SCHIER

TO LISTEN TO JOHN MCCAIN, YOU'D think that the fate of the republic hinges on the immediate ban of soft-money contributions to political parties. His Web page, www.itsyourcountry.com, boldly asserts: "Ban soft money and your voice will be heard in Washington again." Why? "Without reining in soft money and reducing the role of money in politics, we will never have a government that works as hard for the average American as it does for the special interests."

Translation: national government is corrupt largely because of soft money and by clamping down on soft money, political corruption will shrivel. It's a simple and appealing formula. As with most such formulas, however, it misreads reality and promises more than it can deliver. Though we do need to address any possible corruption resulting from campaign contributions, we need to do it in a way that doesn't damage the ability of our already-weak political parties to add some coherence to America's peculiarly complex, candidate-centered politics.

The Hard Goods on Soft Money

Soft money refers to unlimited contributions directly from corporations, unions, and individuals to party committees. A series of Congressional amendments and Federal Election Commission rulings in the 1970s and 1980s permitted political parties to raise unlimited funds for "election related activities" by state and local parties. These monies, held in "nonfederal" accounts, are not subject to the "hard money" limits of the funds in "federal" accounts. Hard money limits cap annual individual contributions at $25,000. They require interest groups to contribute to candidates and parties through regulated Political Action Committees at a maximum rate of $5,000 per candidate per (primary or general) election and limit individual contributions to $1,000 per candidate per election. Though wealthy individuals, corporations, and unions are thus sharply limited in their hard money contributions, the sky is the contribution limit with soft money.

Since 1980 the parties' national committees and their House and Senate campaign committees have raised increasingly mammoth amounts of soft money, cresting at $262 million in 1996 and $250 million in 1998. Where does all of this money go? Originally, soft money was to be spent on grassroots campaigning by state and local parties for brochures, door knocking, and get-out-the-vote efforts.

The real explosion in soft-money fund raising occurred after a 1995 Federal Election Commission ruling that permitted the parties to spend soft money on "issue advocacy" advertising, an obscure government action that had huge consequences. Though issue-advocacy advertising legally cannot expressly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate, it can link candidates to issues in a way that supports or opposes their election. What is express advocacy? The FEC defined it as any communication that uses phrases like "vote for," "vote against," "elect," or "defeat," and "can have no other reasonable meaning than to urge the election or defeat of one or more clearly identified candidates." Creative campaign minds found all sorts of ways around those restrictions in 1996. The race for soft money to fund issue-advocacy advertising had begun.

The campaign finance scandals afflicting the Clinton presidency in recent years have involved raising soft money from dubious, often overseas sources in large amounts. But the real lesson for candidates from the Clinton experience in 1996 is that soft-money spending works. The Democratic party committees spent over $46.5 million on soft-money-funded ads aiding Clinton's re-election in 1996, many of which appeared early in the election year before Dole and the Republicans were able to respond (they eventually did, but with a comparatively meager $18 million in soft-money ads).

Soft money can spell the difference between victo-

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ry and defeat, as the 1998 Kentucky Senate race revealed. Pitting two House incumbents, Democrat Scotty Baesler and Republican Jim Bunning, against each other, the race featured an orgy of soft-money spending by the state parties. Though Baesler began the fall campaign with a double-digit lead over Bunning, he was short on funds after winning a competitive primary. Bunning was assisted by over $1.5 million worth of ads paid for by the Kentucky Republican Party, raised with the help of Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell, an outspoken defender of soft money. One GOP soft money ad attacked Baesler for supporting NAFTA, concluding with a stereotypical Mexican saying, "Muchas Gracias, Senor Baesler." The state Democratic Party could only spend one-third of the Republican total for ads. The money disparity helped Bunning earn a narrow victory in November.

What's Bad about Soft Money?

McCain and his fellow reformers have some good arguments against the current soft-money regime. It's not wise to allow corporations and unions to give unlimited amounts to parties. Large corporations give huge amounts to parties to secure or defend favorable governmental treatment. The publicly owned digital television spectrum was recently distributed for free to television broadcasters, who have given $5 million in soft money in recent years. Agribusiness companies have given over $4.5 million in soft-money in recent years, helping to maintain federal ethanol subsidies worth $500 million annually. Even if these actions aren't out-and-out bribes, they certainly present an "appearance of corruption" to many citizens.

In addition to bad appearances, the explosion of soft money advertising has increased the "clutter" of messages besieging voters during election campaigns. Political scientist David Magelby, in a recent book on the impact of soft-money and issue-advocacy advertising in the 1998 elections, concludes that in competitive House and Senate races, voters are "inundated" with communications about the candidates and that "the negative tone of many of the noncandidate ads has the potential to reinforce alienation and cynicism among voters." In several states, party ads were more negative than those run by candidate campaigns.

So if soft money contributes to at least the appearance of corruption in national politics, confuses and alienates voters, we should get rid of it, right? That is certainly the conventional wisdom about campaign finance reform in many Washington circles. But it's not entirely correct. We need to keep parties well-funded in some form to ensure they don't have their electoral role greatly diminished. Why? Because, despite the clutter, there are some good arguments for party-based election advertising. Our elections can survive the onset of message clutter, but they can't prosper without robust national parties at the center of the campaigns.

The Virtues of Soft Money

The attack on soft money is appropriately an attack on corruption, but it's also an attack on political parties themselves. Throughout American history, political parties have performed vital services for our democracy. America would benefit from stronger parties, for three reasons. First, strong parties bring people into politics. By distilling the choice among a variety of candidates to a selection between one of two partisan "teams," parties lower information costs for voters, thus encouraging those with less education and less income to vote. In the twentieth century, as ballots have become more complex, it has become harder for many voters to sort their way through the increasing amount of information needed to make an informed decision.

The growing trend of recent decades has been toward more personalism in politics, dominated by candidates selling themselves, not a common party platform. Though Congress is more partisan lately because of the close competitive balance between the parties, the public has turned away from political parties. Political scientist Marvin Wattenberg has found that steadily more members of the public have no views at all about political parties and find them less and less relevant to politics. Accordingly, candidates sell themselves as individuals. Just ask yourself when was the last time you saw a party label prominently displayed in a candidate's general election TV or radio ads? Parties have all but disappeared from candidate communication with general election voters because candidates find the party label less useful in rounding up support.

This sort of politics occurs in Latin American countries such as Peru and Venezuela, where presidents Fujimori and Chavez appeal to the masses first. In both countries, personalism has weakened parties and democracy. Though America is far from the instability of Peru and Venezuela, it shares with them a pattern of declining voter participation and disengagement of large segments of the population from politics. The 49 percent turnout in the 1996 U.S. presidential election was the lowest since 1924, shortly after women got the vote. The 36 percent turnout in the 1998 midterm election was the lowest since the 1942 midterm, which occurred in the middle of a world war.

Second, strong parties can shield lawmakers from the very special-interest influence that many accuse them of

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surrendering to. As support for parties and turnout in elections has declined, interest-group membership has grown. Now, the proportion of Americans who are interest group members far exceeds the ranks of strong party identifiers. A 1990 survey conducted for the American Society of Association Executives estimated that 70 percent of the public are members of associations, while the number of strong partisans hovers around 30 percent.

As interests grew in numbers and strength in recent decades, lawmakers became more responsive to them. The number of groups listed in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* mushroomed from 5,000 in 1956 to 23,000 by 1996 and a record number of lobbyists now ply their trade in Washington. From the National Federation of Independent Businesses on the right to the American Association of Retired Persons on the left, national government is beset by hundreds of well-funded, effective, and insistent interest groups. With their resources of campaign money, hired analysts, and memberships that vote, their clout has never been greater.

This cacophony of interests has its costs. Proliferating interest groups do not produce accountable government the way party-based elections can. Worldwide, nations with weak party systems have low participation in elections. Meager electoral participation plays into the hands of organized special interests. In America, these special interests are highly skilled in the art of activating their members to vote and lobby. And with fewer other voters, such groups have a larger voice in electoral outcomes. You need look no farther than the success of Christian conservative groups in promoting the Republican triumph in the 1994 elections to see how well-organized interest groups benefit when others stay home.

Political scientist Robert Putnam correctly argues that accountability to a broad set of interests can only result from heavy electoral participation that exerts influence over the behavior of elected officials. Strong party systems have a global record of facilitating that participation. In America's weak party system, low participation reduces the accountability of those we elect to broad, common interests and enhances their accountability to the narrower set of organized interest groups that help get their favorite candidates elected.

Third, strong and stable parties are essential to the stability of democracy itself. Most of the world's democracies that have survived 25 years or more have had stable party systems with a low number of parties. In most of these nations, parties dominate elections and the operation of government. Many such democracies (and most of the European ones) allow voters to vote only for parties, instead of individual candidates, in elections and have parliamentary systems in which parties gain control of the legislative and executive branches and rule as highly disciplined teams. American parties, in contrast, are a rag-tag assemblage of electoral individualists.

Walter Dean Burnham of the University of Texas summarizes what parties can do for us: "Political parties, with all their well-known human and structural shortcomings, are the only devices thus far invented by the wit of Western man that can, with some effectiveness, generate countervailing collective power on behalf of the many individually powerless against the relatively few who are individually or organizationally powerful." Parties are the best available means for linking majority preferences with governmental action because they help to simplify and clarify voting choices. Choosing between two teams rather than among a plethora of individual candidates makes it easier for more citizens to cast an informed vote. That's one major reason why turnout in just about every other constitutional democracy is well above that of the United States.

To restore this vital party function, we need to make our elections more about parties and their philosophies and less about individual candidates and their personalities. Giving parties more resources with which to do this requires that we not diminish their role in national elections, but rather ensure that they are well funded in ways that minimize apparent or actual corruption.

By encouraging contributions to parties instead of to individual candidates, we can actually limit corruption in American politics. The likelihood of a quid-pro-quo is always greater if the money goes directly to a candidate. By sending money to the parties, we create a "buffer" between campaign contributions and the government officials those contributions seek to influence. The trick is to keep the money from arriving in such large quantities to parties that the buffer virtually disappears, as it has at present.

Reforms to Help the Parties

We need to take several steps to restore parties to a central role in American politics. First, soft-money contributions must be limited to prevent corruption, but preserved to prevent further party decline. A desirable alternative to the McCain-Feingold ban on soft money lies in a bill sponsored by Sens. Bob Kerrey (D) and Chuck Hagel (R) of Nebraska. Their bill caps soft-money contributions at $60,000 per year and indexes hard-money limits for inflation since 1974, effectively tripling them. The soft-money cap will greatly reduce the likelihood of corruption through soft money and the higher hard-money limits will permit larger hard-money

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contributions to parties.

Second, we need to keep the hard-money individual and PAC contribution limits to candidates low, while raising them considerably for political parties. Hard-money limits are enforced and recorded by the Federal Election Commission. Currently, individuals can only give a maximum of $20,000 a year to political parties. That limit should be raised to $50,000, while keeping the individual contribution limits to PACs and directly to candidates at $1,000. This will cause more funds to flow to parties, reducing the power of narrow interests in elections and curbing the appearance (and, at times, reality) of corruption linked to direct contributions from PACs to candidates. Even with higher hard-money contribution limits for parties, the Kerry-Hagel cap on soft-money contributions will prevent the "megacontributions" from unions and corporations to parties that plague our current politics.

Third, to make parties more central to campaigns, we need to allocate large blocks of free airtime to state and national parties for them to use to boost their candidates for national office. This can be a remarkably effective cure for electoral individualism. Campaigns are cash-intensive because of the need to buy TV ads, so giving parties power over ads really hits candidates where they live, making soft-money contributions integral to their success. To make parties more important, the blocks of time allocated to them need to be large. State parties could get one hour for each House candidate they field and two or more hours (pro-rated based on the ratio of Senators to Representatives) for their Senate candidates. National parties each need several hours of network time during the fall presidential campaigns.

Fourth, to weaken the role of interest groups in campaigns, we should ban corporations and unions from direct issue-advocacy electioneering. Those issue-advocacy ads that flood our airwaves during fall elections come straight from corporate and union treasuries, confusing voters and empowering narrow interests at the expense of parties. Such ads seek to aid particular candidates, evading laws passed by Congress that ban corporate contributions to candidates from corporations (in 1907) and unions (in 1947). Courts have upheld contribution bans in the past, so a legislative ban on issue-advocacy ads by such interests might well pass constitutional muster. We need to invite the Supreme Court to reverse *Buckley v. Valeo* on this point.

Fifth, the First Amendment does give individuals the right to run issue ads during campaigns, but the public should have the right to know who is doing the spending. It is difficult to imagine a narrower political interest than a single millionaire or a few wealthy individuals. Elections should involve large, strong parties with broad concerns, not a small number of rich folks with a particular agenda. If we cannot ban that advertising, we can at least strengthen disclosure laws to make it immediately clear who's bought the ads.

These changes will be weak tea for many campaign-finance reformers. Many would like to remove private money from elections completely, or equalize the spending of campaign money through government regulation. Aside from the political improbability of such reforms, such changes would create more problems than they would solve. Figuring out how to equalize expression in campaigns between often little-known challengers and incumbents is an impossible task, and the Supreme Court in *Buckley v. Valeo* explicitly rejected governmental regulation to equalize campaign expression on first amendment grounds. Accordingly, any public financing plan would have to be voluntary (as is presidential campaign finance now). New state public financing laws, recently adopted in Maine and Vermont, however, give all the money directly to candidates and sharply restrict the funds parties can raise to influence elections. That is moving in the wrong direction. Instead of creating "a government that works as hard for the average American as it does for the special interests," as John McCain desires, these laws have diminished the electoral power of political parties, the institutions with the best worldwide record of stimulating turnout in elections.

The Maine and Vermont laws reveal an unpleasant truth about many campaign-finance reformers. Like the progressive movement of the early 20th century, they are aggressively anti-party. The progressives pushed through a variety of reforms that drastically curtailed the power of parties in American politics—the direct primary, personal voter registration, and the end of patronage hiring. As party power shrank, elections increasingly became contests between multitudes of individual candidates instead of between two parties. The electoral world became more indecipherable to more Americans. Guess what? Voting turnout dropped. And it's still remarkably low. During the partisan era of 100 years ago, turnouts of 75 percent were common in presidential elections, far above today's miserable levels, and involving a far less educated electorate than today's voters. Clearly, parties did something right. It's time to give them another chance.

Political parties may be part of the problem with electoral politics, but properly reviving them is very much part of the solution. We need to roll back corrupt practices while strengthening parties. Campaign-finance reformers need to understand that if they want robust campaigns and high turnout, they need to learn how to love political parties, not destroy them.

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Memo of the Month

...via email

The following message is from Don PXXXX:

It is now clear that integrating gender considerations in policies and activities accelerates and deepens economic and political reform processes. This is why the new M/OP procurement regulations state that gender must be included in all RFPs and RFAs. It is also why gender is one of the major cross-cutting themes of the new E&E Strategic Framework.

To operationalize these changes, we are requesting that each Mission have in place by December 2000 a functioning Gender Working Group which will represent all SO teams and be responsible for responding to the new M/OP guidelines and the Bureau's increased emphases.

To support you in carrying out this function, E&E will hold a Regional Gender Workshop in Budapest, July 17-18, at which a number of issues will be addressed, including the composition and efficient functioning of a Gender Working Group.

We are asking that each Mission send one representative of Senior Management (for example, the Deputy or Program Officer), plus the Mission Gender Advisor. George Ingram will be representing the Front Office. Please advise Valerie Estes, the Bureau Gender Advisor, of the names of your participants by May 22, and she will send them further workshop details.

We very much appreciate your cooperation. Don PXXXX

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Sex in the Digital City

Why it's so alluring on AOL and the Internet—and why it's so addictive

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON

I MET CLAY ABOUT A YEAR AGO IN THE BASEment of a smoky club down on 6th St. in New York City's East Village. I had brought a bizarre multi-tonal guitar to play at one of the club's weekly open-microphone sessions. After I finished, Clay asked me if he could borrow the instrument. I said sure, assuming that like everyone else before he'd give up after a few tortured moments trying to navigate around the tiny frets. But his hands moved gracefully and he immediately began to play a gorgeous blues tune on the awkward instrument.

We spent the rest of the night talking and playing music together next to a pile of beer bottles and a pool table. He looked about 21 years old and wore black. He said he had grown up in Canada, someplace near Toronto that I'd never heard of. He had sex with lots of people, men and women. He loved the blues and he didn't want to talk about his life before New York. He was keeping some stuff on the floor of a couple of friends' apartments but many nights he just looked for a sexual partner and stayed with him, her, or them.

I never figured out Clay's whole life story and I never saw him again. But it seemed that he was just following the path of thousands of men and women who have drifted to the big cities to fulfill their dreams and to escape home communities where the woman at the drugstore knows everybody's name. Some become enraptured with the shadows of the city and stay there forever. Others just go for a short trip. Still others do something in between and look back either fondly or regretfully on their "youthful experiment."

Most of us, at one point or another, long to be like Clay. We want to fulfill our primal desires, be anonymous, make up a world and a history if we have to, and wander in the bright lights and the musty corners. But of course we generally don't. The bus trip's too long; we've got a real life to live; other desires and goals are more important.

Now, however, it's easy to be like Clay. Lots of people are making up their own worlds, having sex with dozens of people a day, shifting their identities every half an hour. How? By going online. Men and women who would never have made it to New York with Clay have found their own cities on the Internet and they're replacing their real worlds, and the authentic, complex relationships that organized their lives, with the Internet. And many are discovering that they just don't want to leave these digital cities or, more dangerously, that they can't.

You've got Tail!

Sex on the Net goes far beyond the pornographic images that blanket the Web. Porn has been around for millennia and the Internet has merely increased its scope and availability. The real change brought by the Net is the innovation in sexual conversation between real people typing at different machines; this is the most potent side of the new sexual revolution, created by the crossing of our animal drives with one of the most powerful communication technologies ever invented. This interaction is at the core of what is becoming known among a growing circle of psychologists as the crack cocaine of sex addiction, and it's the foundation of the new bustling city that the Internet has brought into our homes.

If you've never been to this city or if you've never even been on the Internet, America Online makes it simple for you. They've created a system that is almost effortless to load and easy to use. According to spokeswoman Tricia Primrose, the system was set up in part to "appeal to people who remember manual typewriters." All you've got to do is press "enter" on your keyboard, listen for your modem, and look for the innocuous image of waving people labeled "Chat" that appears on your screen. Click twice and you'll be transported into the sweltering labyrinth of chat rooms on which AOL has built much of its business. As millions and millions of people have figured out, if you want erotic excitement, anonymity, and a fantasy life, this is much easier than taking a Greyhound to New York.

The public chat groups on AOL are divided into cat-

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egories—some created by AOL's staff and some by AOL's members. They range from general meeting places to discussions about rock stars to rooms for cross-dressers. But in almost all of them, users mainly flirt or talk about sex. The chat rooms aren't much more than a sprawling singles bar with sections for every sexual fetish known to humanity—and, it often seems, a few others that must have just been dreamed up.

Researching this article, I put in dozens of room hours, saving conversations to my hard drive. On five separate evenings, I logged chat rooms for the entire night and found that at least two-thirds of the chat is flirtatious or sex-related. Here's a random selection, culled from the bottom of the first page of my printed transcript of five groups selected randomly in the "Town Square," "Arts and Entertainment," and "Romance" sections. "Ever been with a guy my age?" "I'm about to bang on my dick," "I'd just like Britney sitting on my face" [from the Britney Spears fan club chat room], "Babe, lets go chat personally," and "Any ladies with self pics want to trade? I also have a videophone." In the rooms created by members, "Dominatrix 4 sub m" for example, things get even more interesting. There are also rooms that fill up nightly like "xprexteexnxgixrls" in which every visitor is entered onto lists where members privately swap pictures of naked pre-teenage girls.

When members meet in any of these rooms, their common pattern is to talk about sex for a while and then proceed to AOL's Instant Messenger, a program that allows you to communicate with someone else privately in real time—going from the virtual bar to the virtual hotel room. In the many hours that we spent online at the *Monthly* researching this piece, approximately 90 percent of all the Instant Messages received were attempted pickups. No wonder Ted Leonsis, president of the AOL Interactive Properties Group, once quipped to the Internet magazine *ZDNet* that 99 percent of Instant Messages began "Hi, Male or Female?"

One Hand Typing

AOL didn't invent sexual banter, but the Internet and AOL have brought sex one giant step closer to everybody. Few people feel truly comfortable buying a pornographic magazine in a grocery store. Over the Internet, however, all of these social anxieties are washed away. Anyone can find porn within seconds on the Net, and it's easy to hit on someone in a chat room; there's little fear of rejection since you can just bounce away, or even change your name. In the real world, it's hard to meet someone; it's difficult to match up sexually, and there are a thousand things to worry about—from STDs to pregnancy to embarrassment in your home community. This is particularly true for groups that have been stigmatized sexually, like the homosexual community. If you are gay, you can just log onto AOL and enter one of the numerous "m4m" chat rooms or the slightly less common "f4f" ones; if you are a hairy gay man, you can join "bears4bears." Hermaphrodites even have their own series of "shemale4male" groups. If AOL's too tame, switch over to gay.com, a site which leaves even less unsaid. Users creating member profiles are asked to check their "best attribute" from the following: "Body, Butt, Checkbook, Face, Intelligence, Legs, Personality, Sense of Humor, or Shoe Size." Shoe size, of course, doesn't refer to the size of one's shoes.

Chat on the Net has brought sex into a middle ground between fantasy and reality. You aren't reading a dirty magazine alone in a barn and you aren't actually having sex with someone. You aren't just thinking what it would be like to follow Clay's path; and you aren't actually standing on a street corner looking for partners, with a cigarette dangling from your mouth.

The other strong appeal of sexual discussion on the Internet is the opportunity to fill in the blanks about your partners. If the woman of your dreams has red hair and is young and lithe, log onto AOL, enter the chat room, and describe your fantasy partner. Someone will respond with basic details that match your ideal—red hair, 5'8", 130 pounds—and you fill in the details. You can imagine them as anyone. You can pretend that she looks just like the woman you fell in love with years ago, or maybe that she just looks like the gorgeous young woman buying a half-gallon of milk in the grocery store yesterday morning. And she, no doubt, is doing the same thing with you.

Once they've chatted a few times, people can begin to develop a pseudo life online and get caught in the same trap as the ancient Chinese philosopher who dreamt he was a butterfly and then spent the rest of his life wondering if he wasn't just a butterfly dreaming he was a man. Here is a conversation between a woman named Kara and a man named Jason (not their real names) on AOL who logged on with the screen names Emeraldeyz and Cobalt4. They met in a chat group, gave each other sketches of their lives and their careers, and began to flirt in the Internet's peculiar language where emotions are expressed by symbols and letters: <g> means "I'm grinning" and smiley faces—like :) or the slightly cooler ;D —mean you're happy. You show laughter by typing "LOL" (laughing out loud), "ROFL" (rolling on the floor laughing), or even "OTFFLMAO" (on the floor f***ing laughing my ass off).

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EmeraldEyz: Do you like Natalie Merchant?
Cobalt4: Singer?
EmeraldEyz: Yes!
EmeraldEyz: She has this one song .....
Cobalt4: Yes ...
EmeraldEyz: There is a line in the refrain about Fate smiles And Destiny? ...
EmeraldEyz: It's a nice thought at least =)
Cobalt4: < – Hoping that Fate and Destiny will smile at me. :-)
Cobalt4: Hey in 15 days I have a b-day! "Major hmmm" <G>
EmeraldEyz: Oooo a birthday? . .. :::smiles:::
Cobalt4: <– Loves "unwrapping" B-day presents <g>

Soon Cobalt4 and EmeraldEyz started to seduce each other over the Internet and moved into a sexual relationship:

EmeraldEyz: :::pressing up against you. Loving the feel of your skin against mine...
Cobalt4: sliding my hand down your back ... caressing ...
EmeraldEyz: :::::wiggling into your hands:::::
Cobalt4: :::rolling you over onto your stomach... taking your arms and raising them above your head.

Their relationship moved from the tame into the sadomasochistic:

Cobalt4: :::smiles::: Oh, and just what were you thinking about?
EmeraldEyz: May I be forward?
Cobalt4: Please do, I expect nothing less.
EmeraldEyz: I was thinking how nice it would be to be tied up by you... ...

On and on it went. They had sex repeatedly over the Internet; they tied each other's ankles to the bedboards with silk scarves; Kara acted out scenes as Jason's slave; and they even had an online breakup and makeup session:

Cobalt4: :::looking into your eyes as you look into mine:::
Cobalt4: What do you see Kara?
EmeraldEyz: Hurt... forgiveness... love.
Cobalt4: and I see the same.
Cobalt4: holding you close and tight...
EmeraldEyz: :::::::wrapping my arms around you...softly crying into your shoulder::::

Eventually Kara and Jason decided to meet in person and set up a trip.

EmeraldEyz: I'm leaving for the airport now love, I can NOT wait to see you!!!!!!
::::::kissing you long and slow as I go::::::::

But when Jason showed up at the airport, Kara wasn't there. He got an email a day later from her account saying it was her brother and that Kara had gotten in a car accident on the way to the airport. "She is okay though, just a broken leg, some bruised ribs, and a concussion. We expect they will release her later today or early tomorrow."

But none of it was true. Kara wasn't Kara; her brother wasn't her brother; and she wasn't in a car crash. Kara was in fact a woman named Deana, one of Jason's ex-girlfriends who had broken up with him because of his obsession with the Internet and addiction to the virtual world. She'd had a son with him during their real-world relationship, before he left to pursue trysts online. Creating her screen name of "EmeraldEyz" was just her way of getting back at him for hurting her. Soon, Deana sent her last false message to Jason and deleted the EmeraldEyz account from AOL.

Sex Without A Face

Sometimes a cyber-relationship works when people move offline, like the one between Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks in *You've Got Mail.* The Internet can open communication between people who wouldn't have talked before, and it has created another form of communication that combines some of the spontaneity of personal communication with some of the intimacy of letters. It's a wonderful way for couples to stay in touch long distance, and there are few people with access to computers in the past five years who haven't had a relationship at least somewhat enhanced by email.

But relationships that work are usually built upon a real-world base, and a set of shared experiences away from the keyboard. Relationships that develop without this background on the Net tend to quickly fall apart. Online, users build fantasies about the partners from sparse details. When you meet someone online, you're meeting them with almost no context and your perception of them has been boxed into a single scripted dimension. In the real world, no matter where you are, relationships usually have layers. If you court someone in a small town, you may have gone to nursery school with her brother and you might have a friend who works for her father. If you court her in a big city, there's more mystery; but you still can sketch in important details just by meeting her friends and finding out where she likes to spend her time and what she really hangs on the walls of her apartment. You learn if she's kind and thoughtful to others—qualities that just don't easily come across a digital screen. You get to know each other by absorbing information that bounces toward you from different directions, both when you're together and when you're

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apart.

But in cyberspace, everything comes from one direction, nothing is real for sure, and there are almost no reference points. People become the people they've always wanted to be, and it's terribly difficult to figure out someone's true essence from printed lines scrolling across your screen. There's also a distance at the core of any online relationship. One longtime AOL user I spoke to had an affair over the Internet with a man she found incredibly interesting and considered to be very attractive. After a while, he mailed her a diamond ring and she agreed to fly to Colorado to meet him in person. But it didn't work out. "He was the ugliest, hairiest person I'd ever met in my life," she said. "I faked being sick and went home."

In part this failure shows how complicated attraction can be. But it also shows the coarseness and unreality of online relationships. It's easy to build up an intimacy that seems to be worth a diamond ring; it's hard to make the relationship strong enough to get past body hair.

The other problem with online relationships is that it's devilishly easy to deceive. Almost everyone in every chat room I met claimed to be somewhere between 18 and 25, and very good-looking. People frequently pretend they are a different race, and changing sex is a relatively well-known phenomenon called "gender bending" that 40 percent of all users have engaged in, according to a recent study published in *Information, Communication and Society*. One man I met in a chat room said that a close friend of his had seduced another man online by pretending that he was a woman. After cybersex, he revealed his own identity and his partner responded, "that's OK, I'm a woman." In 1998, a couple who married after meeting on AOL divorced four months later when the bride realized that she had actually married another woman who had covered her chest with bandages and said they needed to avoid intimacy for fear of HIV.

People lie in the real world—on street corners, on the telephone, everywhere. But there are ways to figure them out, and it's much easier to track down a real-life person than an onscreen address that can be deleted in a second. It's possible that the man in the gay chat room who told me the story about gender-bending was making it up. I'm pretty certain Deana was telling me the truth since she sent me heaps of transcripts, dated files, and images—and we talked about it on the phone. But it's hard to be absolutely positive of anything when you're on the Net.

Sex in the Digital City

The biggest problem with these fantasy worlds is that they can become so alluring that they are, quite literally, addictive. According to a study done by Al Cooper, a psychologist at Stanford, one percent of all Internet users can be classified as "cybersex compulsives," those whose sexual Internet use is enough to lead to negative consequences at home and at work; another eight percent of all users, or about two million people, spend more than 11 hours a week pursuing online sex—about the same number of people who are addicted to cocaine in this country. According to Dr. James Fearing, president of the National Counseling Intervention Services, "We are having a real hard time clinically trying to get our arms around this problem. It has come on so fast that we don't know how big it is .... What we do know is that families are breaking up, young people are flunking out of school, and people are being fired from their jobs." Last summer, for example, Kelli Michetti, a 29-year-old Cleveland housewife, attacked her husband's computer with a meat cleaver when she decided that he had been spending just a bit too much time pursuing sex online.

To most people the thrill of such trysts does not lie in the consummation, online or off. According to Robert Weiss, clinical director of the Sexual Recovery Institute in Los Angeles, "Sex addiction is not about sex. It is not about orgasm... It's about looking for sex. Your heart is racing. Your endorphins are pumping. You are in a drug-induced narcotic state." Weiss makes a comparison to gambling where the thrill really isn't about winning, but about the rush of watching the dice roll or the slots spin. In fact, some people develop a Pavlovian response to their sexual chat. As soon as they sit down at the computer, they need to be online; they begin to get a rush when they turn on the machine, and, by the time they are cruising the chat rooms, they are in a virtually hypnotic state, bouncing from room to room and person to person. According to Dr. Dana Putnam, director of onlinesexaddict.org: "Their blood flow changes. Their heart rate goes up. They're in a more alert state, more focused. They shut out external events."

The problems of addiction cut across gender, even though many more men are online and men enjoy pornography more than women. But chat, according to numerous studies, is just as popular among women, who are more drawn to interactive sexual fantasy. According to Dr. Kimberly Young, executive director of the Center for Online Addiction, men are more "hard-wired" to like pornography, but chat rooms "become a safe forum for women. And they can find it addictive to explore sexuality in different ways."

Skeptics counter that people who become hooked on online sex are just people with addictive personalities: If they weren't spending 16 hours a day online, they'd be

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dialing 1-900 numbers or chain-smoking on a park bench next to a quart of gin in a brown paper bag. To some extent this is true, but there is also evidence that a great many Internet sex-addicts are new to addiction. According to Mark Schwartz, clinical director of the Masters and Johnson treatment center in St. Louis, Internet sex addiction is spreading the way that cocaine spread in the early 1980s in white-collar society. Because of the ease of access, "A lot of people are finding themselves addicted to something for the first time."

In other words, people who would never have gotten on that bus to New York with Clay are eagerly buying their tickets, finding their seats, and getting drawn into the world of cybersex. And many can't get out.

Innovative Sex

The spread of sex on the Net was almost inevitable. Every time a technology develops that can break down one of our sexual barriers, someone figures out a way to market it—from the first pornographic novel, the classic *Fanny Hill*, just a few years after the invention of the modern form with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, to the pornographic peddlers of daguerreotypes in mid-19th century France, to the pornographic videocassette industry in the United States which was responsible for approximately three-fourths of all rentals and sales in the technology's early years. As Gerard van der Leun, president of The Source, one of the very first online services, presciently wrote in *Wired* in 1979: "All media, if they are to get a jump-start in the market and become successful, must address themselves to mass drives—those things we hold in common as basic human needs. But of all these: food, shelter, sex and money; sex is the one drive that can elicit immediate consumer response."

One of the early users of The Source was none other than AOL's future CEO, Steve Case, who was working for Pizza Hut and logging on at night with a painfully slow Kaypro computer. And Case learned his lesson: He recognized that a technology had been developed that broke down a sexual barrier and he marketed it. Sex didn't move into the core of AOL as a result of any corporate perversion—in fact the company has now developed one of the very best systems for keeping children away from online porn. It moved into the core of AOL because the company wanted to get customers.

The power of sex chat became clear in the early and mid-1990s as AOL, CompuServe, and Prodigy battled to control the market for Internet service providers. AOL was the smallest of the three, but it began to gain rapidly in no small part because it was also the raciest: the first company to heavily market its chat groups, the only one to allow private rooms, and the first company to have unregulated message boards. Prodigy didn't even develop chat rooms until it had already started to fade and CompuServe's somewhat similar "conference rooms" were heavily patrolled. Prodigy's closest equivalent was boards where, originally, staff members scanned every message and, later, a filtering system was developed to weed out messages containing sexual content or vulgarity. AOL also heavily promoted its policy of allowing accounts with multiple screen names—helping families, but also allowing users to instantly switch to code names like "hotlegs49" for trolling the chat groups anonymously.

At the time, Prodigy was owned by Sears and IBM, and CompuServe was owned by H&R Block, and the parent companies were terrified for their reputations and worried about potential liability. According to Jenny Ambrozek, Prodigy's manager for Bulletin Board Communications, "It became clear very quickly that IBM and Sears had major problems with being associated with a product that was sexual." Another senior Prodigy employee once told Kara Swisher of *The Wall Street Journal* that sex chat is "why AOL has eight million members and Prodigy has faded to a shadow of its former self." Yes, there were many reasons why AOL eventually buried its competitors, but sex appeal was a major one. According to a former AOL employee I spoke with: "If they were going to get rid of all of the people who are perverts or pedophiles, their numbers would go down by the millions."

You Make Me Real

There's nothing legally wrong with sexual chat. If someone wants to risk a divorce so that they can spend their life playing S&M games on a computer screen, they do and should have the right. But there is something unnerving about this. When I asked Deana what society would be like in a future with high-speed broadband Internet connections, she merrily typed back: "Everyone will be fat and online 24/7 ;x." It doesn't necessarily make you a prude or a stooge for Big Brother if you think that maybe this isn't such a good thing.

The Internet provides an illusion of attractiveness, of intimacy, and of self-confidence. It allows you to have a relationship or an affair without having to get to really know the person you're with; and it lets you end the relationship just by pressing the delete key. It allows you to become blond or honest by simply saying you are. It allows you to play the role of Clay without having to wake up in a strange bed with a hangover. On the Internet, we can all live Life Lite. And when that happens, it becomes impossible to access the complexities of relationships that really make them worthwhile.

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Moreover, the digital city shows no pity for those whom it traps. In the real world, we get less attractive, money grows tight, expectations begin to catch up to us, and we have networks of flesh and blood friends who notice the extra lines on our faces and help pull us back from the mire. Soon enough, we take the bus back home and look for a lasting relationship with someone; at the least, we get an apartment and settle into a community. But when you're on the Internet, friends are just names on screens, there's always another kind of chat to explore, and the technology just gets faster, cheaper, and more seductive.

The cities created by the Internet are no longer just easy to get to, and they're no longer just breaking down barriers: With the advent of broadband access and free connections, they're actually coming to look for us. And it's hard not to think that, for all the wonders of the Internet, there aren't going to be more and more people ending up like Jason: stuck in the dark corners of their carefully constructed cyberworlds, bouncing from relationship to relationship and person to person—letting their eyes blur and the distance between themselves and their computer screen shrink. ●

Research assistance provided by Rachel Marcus, Joshua L. Shapiro, and Aaron Tracy.

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

MAY 2000

STEPHEN J. HEDGES AND WILLIAM GAINES

"The Body Parts Business"

Chicago Tribune: 5/21-5/22

Families donating the organs and tissue of recently deceased loved ones are unknowingly supporting a multi-million-dollar industry. The average cadaver brings in $80,000 for companies that profit, for example, by selling heart valves for transplants, as well as skin for cosmetic surgery. The FDA does not heavily regulate the domestic body parts business, largely because it focuses its time and money trying to regulate the tissue that companies illegally import from foreign donors. This story exposes the dangers of the human tissue industry: the exploitation of donors and the public health risk for recipients.

MARK SKERTIC

"Tire Tread Blowouts Killing Without Notice"

Chicago Sun-Times: 4/30-5/1

Since 1990, at least 43 deaths have been blamed on tread belt separation—the separation of the steel belt from the rubber tread in a radial tire. Tire manufacturers blame the accidents on drivers for not regularly checking the tires, but Skertic's investigation reveals that the problem might easily be solved with an inexpensive change in the production process—a change that has already been made in most of Europe. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration requires tiremakers to send in service bulletins but Skertic notes that the NHTSA has not received a bulletin detailing problems with tires in the last five years.

PATRICIA CALLAHAN AND KIRK MITCHELL

"Vulnerable Lives: The Business of Foster Care"

The Denver Post: 5/21-5/24

The Colorado state foster-care system, which now puts over half of the state's foster children into programs run by private agencies, is a disaster. While 40 of the private agencies had no serious problems, the other 11 gathered 1,057 violations of state rules in five years—including the placement of children in the homes of convicted criminals and child abusers. The Denver Post *found that the state's own audit declared private and public foster care to be equal, yet the state continues to spend three times as much money on the private agencies, allocating funds to cover basic administrative costs and staff that are already in place in the Counties. On June 1, the Colorado state legislature convened a special committee to examine the state's foster-care system in response to Callahan and Mitchell's series.*

THE MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including two copies of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009. Or e-mail us at **editors@washingtonmonthly.com**. Nominations for stories run in June and July are due August 1, 2000.

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Global Shell Games

How corporations operate tax free

BY SEN. BYRON DORGAN

REMEMBER THE PENTAGON'S $600 toilet seats and $426 hammers? Now there's a new list to think about: Ball point pens purchased from Trinidad for $8,500. Disposable plastic gloves from Japan at $46.22 a piece. Wrist watch batteries from China at $8,252 each. Apple juice from Israel at $2,052 a liter.

It's a shopping spree a defense contractor might love. But this time the Pentagon is not involved; nor any other part of the government, for that matter. Instead the strange prices are the work of multinational corporations, and one of the biggest tax avoidance scams this country has ever seen. The ideological Right makes a big deal over what it calls "Tax Freedom Day"—the day on which Americans supposedly have fulfilled their tax burden for the year. They neglect to mention that every day is tax freedom day for these multinationals. More than two-thirds of foreign-based multinationals doing business here—and only a slightly smaller fraction of U.S.-based multinational firms—pay no federal income tax at all. Many of the rest are paying a relative pittance. As a result, U.S. taxpayers are losing over $40 billion a year by one estimate, which is enough to pay for a prescription drug benefit in Medicare. Considering that corporate profits have soared in recent years something here does not compute. The manipulation of prices at the border is a big part of this screwy equation.

It points to one of the great contradictions in the push for globalization. From its proponents we hear no end of rhapsodizing over the new "world without borders" that is going to bring peace and prosperity without end. Yet when the discussion turns to the rules of trade, as opposed to the theology of it, then the advocates often sing a different tune. They suddenly become dogged defenders of the very same national borders they deride as obsolete. They want to wipe out national boundaries when it means lowering standards for such things as workplace safety, the integrity of the food supply, and the like. But they want to maintain a balkanized world when national boundaries serve to protect them against higher standards.

Tax policy is an example. It is not a coincidence that as global trade has expanded, the tax burden has shifted increasingly onto working people. In the U.S., corporations are contributing a paltry 10 percent of the federal income tax burden, about one-half the level they paid in the 1960s, with further declines projected in coming years. It is a symptom of a set of ground rules that let corporations reap the greatest benefits of trade and make workers bear the primary burdens. It is what happens when the trade debate wafts off into the slogans of the global economy and doesn't attend to the details—details that may leave ordinary Americans with the short end of the stick.

Moving Out

If there is one provision in the U.S. tax laws that demonstrates the hypocrisy of some free-traders, it is the subsidy for corporations that move their plants abroad. Globalization is supposed to give us a market free of preferences and subsidies, in which nations compete according to their "natural advantage." Yet the same people who preach about this idealized world market support a tax system that violates it in the most fundamental way. The U.S. tax code actually rewards companies that move their factories, know-how, or financial operations abroad. Close shop in the U.S., shift your assets to Singapore, China, or Bermuda, and the U.S. Treasury rewards you for your trouble. Under a practice called "deferral," runaway plants pay no tax at all on

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their earnings abroad until they bring that income back into the U.S., which may be never.

This may strain belief. Corporations already have no shortage of enticements to abandon the U.S. in favor of such locales—sweat-shop wages, weak environmental standards, sometimes even slave labor. The last thing the federal government should do is create a tax bribe on top of all that—or so one would think. Yet that's exactly what Congress has done. This reward system for runaway plants, and other assets, costs federal taxpayers some $3.4 billion a year and rising. It is part of why the U.S. has lost well over 3 million well-paying manufacturing jobs since 1979.

Why does such a thing exist? Deferral illustrates a basic principle of tax boondoggles: "Once in, never out." There is no provision in the tax code called "deferral." It is the result of other provisions drafted for other purposes. It was tolerable in the beginning because multinationals were not that large a part of commerce. In the aftermath of World War II, when Europe was devastated and America had productive capacity to spare, it seemed justifiable. As Europe and Asia became commercial rivals, however, deferral became an indiscriminate subsidy the U.S. could not afford.

But by this time it had a big corporate constituency that had latched onto deferral as a way to multiply the benefits of tax havens around the world. Try to change it, and you will be accused of trying to dismantle the free enterprise system, and of turning America into the next Haiti. I speak from experience on this.

Nowadays the subsidy lobby argues that deferral is necessary for U.S. companies to compete in foreign markets. But I cannot understand why the U.S. government should be so solicitous of U.S.-based firms if they aren't going to invest in the U.S in the first place. Why should American taxpayers pay for the services of a military defense that benefits these companies—including trade negotiations and defense—while they scramble around the globe looking for ways to avoid their fair share of the bill?

Lobbyists also say that the deferral bonus is only temporary, until the earnings come back into the U.S. Yet in practice those profits tend to pile up abroad where they can be used for currency speculation or new overseas investment. "There are huge sums out there—trillions of dollars," says Michael McIntyre, a law professor at Wayne State University. Moreover, tax lawyers have created a minor industry out of devising ways to bring those profits back into the U.S. without the tax collectors noticing. The 1986 tax reform act tightened up this area somewhat. But where there's a tax lawyer, there's a way. "I suspect there are people who do it regularly and are hoping not to be audited," says McIntyre, who used to devise such strategies himself.

But let's give them the benefit of the doubt. Let's grant, for the sake of argument, that corporations need deferral to compete in foreign markets. That still doesn't explain why they need it when they move plants abroad and then sell the products back into the U.S. In that case, the provision is a direct subsidy for putting U.S. factory workers out of work. It is a slap in the face to the company that strives to keep its jobs here at home.

The answer to the deferral problem is simple. I have been proposing it in Congress for several years. At the very least we ought to eliminate this practice when U.S. firms set up factories in foreign tax havens and then sell those products back into the U.S. This would provide a measure of justice for the company struggling to keep its workforce in the U.S., and it would move us a step closer to a global marketplace that functions the way its advocates say it should.

Shady Transfers

Moving plants and other assets abroad is one way multinationals avoid their fair share of the tax burden. Another is the use of accounting shell games to shift their income to outside the United States. This second scam is called "transfer pricing."

Multinationals can take advantage of transfer pricing because the face they present to tax administrators and other legal authorities is very different from the face they present to the public. To the public, Sony Corporation—to take a random example—is simply Sony. Whether people are shopping in New York or Topeka, Oslo or Gdansk, the company appears the same. And as a general rule when the company reports its earnings to shareholders, it does so as a unified world-wide business. To tax agencies, however, the multinational presents itself as a complicated network of affiliates legally organized hither and yon. There might be a Sony U.S., a Sony Brazil, a Sony in tax havens such as Singapore and Bermuda, ad infinitum. Sometimes there are valid reasons for such arrangements. But in practice, corporations can use their complex intra-corporate webs to play all sorts of games, and taxes are high on the list.

This is where the $8,252 wrist-watch batteries come in. The prices seem ridiculous, but only if you don't understand the game. The multinational does-

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n't really spend that money because it charges the inflated price to itself. It takes the money out of one pocket—its operations in the U.S.—and puts it into another, which is its operations abroad. The effect is to shift profits out of the U.S. and therefore beyond the shelter of the Internal Revenue Code. You can't make money buying ball-point pens for $8,500 and selling them for $3.98 and that's what transfer pricing is all about.

Transfer pricing is probably the single most important reason that so many major corporations pay little or no federal income tax. "The bottom line is that the American public is being robbed," says Finance Professor Simon Pak of Florida International University who has studied this question closely.

Close shop in the United States, shift your assets to Bermuda, and the U.S. Treasury rewards you for your trouble.

Professor Pak and his colleague, Professor John Zdanowicz, have estimated that this scam cost U.S. taxpayers some $43 billion last year, or more than $117 million a day. They reached this estimate by examining customs receipts, which declare the purchase or sale prices of products passing across the U.S. border. They tallied both the extraordinarily high prices for products coming into the country, and the extraordinarily low prices for products going out. (Low nominal export prices are another way to shift income out of the U.S.) Then they used a sophisticated computer model to make a conservative estimate of the revenue implications.

The results make the Pentagon procurement office seem a model of probity. I've already mentioned some of the super-high prices for imports. The export prices were just as absurd: There were missile launchers sold to Venezuela for $59.50; automatic teller machines to the Dominican Republic for $45.25; venetian blinds to Germany for 12 cents; tractors to Canada for $448.41. I know a lot of farmers in North Dakota who would like to get a deal like that.

A revenue loss of over $40 billion is not a small amount of change. But money is not the only issue. It undermines the legitimacy of the whole federal tax system when the large and powerful can avoid their share of the burden through strategies like these. One would think the Treasury would be concerned, and it is in a sense. Yet the way it tries to address the problem is so out of touch with reality that it seems lifted from an episode of the Keystone Kops.

Basically, the Treasury accepts at face value the lawyer's fiction that a multinational corporation is composed of truly independent entities, incorporated in different nations and seeking their own maximum advantage in the market. It pretends that Sony Bermuda, say, really is totally separate from Sony U.S., Sony Japan, and the rest. IRS agents literally comb through the transactions between a U.S. subsidiary and its affiliates abroad, and try to adjust them to "arms length prices"—i.e., what the price would have been if the entities really had been independent of one another.

This is like trying to disentangle a vat of spaghetti with a toothpick. Conceptually, the approach is totally out to lunch. The subsidiaries of a multinational corporation aren't independent. They are like organs of the same body. One reason a multinational exists is to overcome the limitations of arms-length dealing. "The very existence of integrated multinational corporations is evidence that the arms-length system does not reflect economic reality," says Reuven S. Avi-Yonah, assistant professor of law at Harvard University Law School.

In other words, the quest for an arms-length price for transactions within a multinational group is a quest for something that does not generally exist. Stanley I. Langbein, a professor at the University of Miami law school who served in the Treasury's Office of International Tax Counsel, agrees that the arms-length method "does not work and cannot be made to work."

The result is a hapless, bureaucratic undertaking that is an enormous drain on resources. The audit hours are endless, as is the resulting litigation. The General Accounting Office has called these cases "burdensome, time consuming, and expensive" for all concerned. In 1992, a survey found that some $32 billion in disputed revenue was tied up in pending Tax Court proceedings over transfer pricing issues, twice the amount of three years earlier. (The Tax Court has not made such a tally since.) In one such case, the defendant, Mobil Oil, submitted 1.3 million

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pages of unlabeled documents as evidence. One suspects that judges do not look forward to cases of this kind. But that Mobil Oil is willing to go to all that trouble suggests how much they stand to lose—or gain.

The sad part is, there's a better way. The states have had to deal with the basic problem—corporations operating across jurisdictional borders—much longer than the federal government has. And from necessity, the states devised a method that is relatively simple. It started with the railroads, which tried to tell the states that their property in a given jurisdiction was worth just the salvage value of the tracks and ties. "Wait a minute," the states replied. Those tracks were part of sprawling corporate enterprises, and you couldn't reckon the value of the part without taking into account the value of the whole.

So the states developed the "unit rule," which regards the railroad as what it is—a unitary business, though operating in different states and perhaps through various corporate entities. Accordingly, for purposes of property-tax assessment, the states apportioned the value of the whole over the various parts. Later, when the states enacted income taxes they applied this same basic method. They took the income of the entire enterprise and apportioned it among the different states according to a formula. If a tenth of the property, payroll, and sales were in a particular state, then a tenth of the income got reported there as well, regardless of the accounting gymnastics that a company might contrive. The formula determines only how much a company reports, not how much tax it pays. If the state wants to have low rates, or no tax at all, that's its own business.

The formula method isn't perfect of course. No method is. But compared to the Treasury's approach it is a big step forward. It renders moot much of the sophisticated tax lawyering and accounting shell games that corporations employ. If every nation employed a formula approach then tax administration would be simpler and companies could focus on their business rather than on tax avoidance, which would be good for all concerned.

Some states actually have applied the formula approach to multinationals, which was a natural extension. Is there that much difference—especially after NAFTA—between the border that runs between North Dakota and Montana and the one between those states and Canada? Yet most multinationals went ballistic, and the battle against the "unitary" method quickly became a cash cow on K Street—one of those contentious Washington issues that drags on for years beneath the radar of mainstream media. Eventually, pressure from multinational corporations became too great, and California—the leader in the simplification movement—had to relent. Other states followed suit. Today about half a dozen states permit multinationals to file as unitary businesses but don't require it. Once again, corporations can choose globalization when it suits them but can hide behind national borders when it doesn't.

The truly weird part is that Treasury has seen the futility of its archaic methods. It is moving slowly toward the formula approach—but in an obscure, case-by-case way. The latest chapter in this administrative fiasco is something called Advanced Pricing Agreements or APAs. Basically the corporations sit down with the IRS behind closed doors and negotiate their transfer prices. In effect, they negotiate their own tax bills; and as though that weren't bad enough, Congress, in its infinite solicitude, has made these agreements secret except for publication in vague general terms.

To put this another way, there are two income-tax systems in America today. Working people pay what they have to, while the largest corporations pay pretty much what they want to. The IRS actually has shifted audit resources in recent years so that it comes down harder on small taxpayers and easier on the bigger ones. The rampant corporate avoidance is taking us down the path of countries such as Italy, where people think that only suckers pay. Speaking of the secret APAs, Professor Avi-Yonah writes, "This is hardly the type of practice one wishes to encourage in a tax system based on both voluntary compliance and the impression that wealthy taxpayers are subject to the same standards as everyone else."

The practice also confirms what many Americans suspect about the global economy generally—that if you are a real person you bear the burdens, and if you are a large corporation then you enjoy the gains. The burdens should be shared so that the gains can be shared too.

As with deferral, the answer here is not hard. We need to develop consistent formulas to apportion the income of multinational firms. Such an approach would not be perfect. But it would be an improvement and it would demonstrate to people that the actual rules of trade are in synch with the rhetoric of globalization. People are getting taken; and unless we start looking at the details—unless we debate the rules of trade in concrete terms rather than as theologians—things are going to get worse. ●

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The Courtier's Art

Flattery through the ages

By David Ignatius

MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, I SENT A LETTER to a college classmate and fellow journalist whom I'll call "K." I had not seen him in a while, and in the interim he had become a powerful figure in the media, and it worried me slightly that we had never quite clicked as friends. I don't recall precisely what I wrote, except that it offered generous praise—fulsome praise, even—for one of his acerbic columns in *The Washington Post.*

YOU'RE TOO KIND: A Brief History of Flattery
By Richard Stengel
Simon & Schuster, $25.00

Not long after that, "K" wrote a column about flattery. He noted the delicious pleasure he took in receiving insincere letters of praise from people who wanted to curry his favor. His theme was that insincere praise is really the best kind of all—because it shows how desperately someone wants to ingratiate himself. "After all," he wrote, "what do I care what this philistine oaf actually thinks about my article? On the other hand, there is a genuine if unintended compliment in the fact that he troubled to write—and the less he meant what he said, the greater the compliment." It was many years before I wrote another letter to "K."

But perhaps I flatter myself. Perhaps it was some other toadying letter that prompted "K's" acid response. Perhaps I have only imagined all these years that my insincerity rose to a level of obsequiousness that prompted his retort. Perhaps mine was only ordinary insincerity, and he had some entirely different fawning letter-writer in mind.

These are the sort of bilious thoughts that emerge from reading Richard Stengel's history of flattery. *You're Too Kind* is a learned and lucid examination of ass-kissing over the ages, and it will be a rare modern reader who does not at some point cringe with self-recognition. Even "K," I suspect, will see himself in this catalogue of courtiers and connivers. For as Stengel makes clear, flattery is the coin of our realm. And the most interesting form of ingratiation is one that will be familiar to *Washington Monthly* readers—who by definition are smart enough to see through the simpler forms of brown nosing and fawning praise—and must therefore play the Master Game, where flattery is coated in irony and cynicism. In the clever, meritocratic world we inhabit, as Stengel says, "You don't see ... fastball-over-the-center-of-the-plate flattery, but a slider that just nicks the corner." Do I flatter you, dear reader? I hope so.

What's eerie about this book is the universality of flattery. Stengel chronicles its persistence through all of recorded human history—from the ancient Egyptians to the Greeks, from the courts of medieval Europe to the corridors of Washington lobbyists. One would be tempted to say that man is the animal that flatters—except that Stengel shows that chimpanzees outdo humans in the ass-kissing department, taking the matter all too literally.

One of the most intriguing sections of the book, in fact, is Stengel's discussion of how chimpanzees curry favor through the ritual behavior of grooming. The fawning ritual begins with the subordinate chimp greeting the dominant "alpha" male. Stengel explains: "Sometimes the greeter kisses the feet of the alpha male and brings along objects, like a leaf or stick, as a kind of offering .... Females, instead of greeting the alpha male, present their backsides to be inspected and sniffed. Sometimes the alpha male will permit subordinates to fondle his scrotum, which is considered a form of reassurance for both the dominant chimp and the subordinate one."

"Their behavior should seem disconcertingly familiar," Stengel notes tartly. "Unlike us, however, chimps don't have the ability to weave the elaborate explanations that we use to justify our more craven conduct."

In the animal world, as in ours, deception has the

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essential purpose of enhancing the deceiver's chances of survival. "Nature doesn't care about truth," writes Stengel. He notes that harmless snakes mimic the bright colors of poisonous ones, so as better to survive; similarly, butterflies that might be eaten by predatory birds mimic the colors of the foul-tasting butterflies the birds ignore. Most species have a version of what anthropologists call the "pecking order," in which weak animals pay court to strong ones. They fawn, flatter, falsify—whatever will help them survive and pass on their genes.

Stengel has assembled a rich catalogue of flattery over time. Nearly every society, it seems, prepared some sort of handbook for flatterers. The ancient Egyptian writer Ptahhotep, for example, offered a compendium of advice about how to ingratiate yourself with the Pharaoh, including this memorable admonition: "Laugh after he laughs, and it will be very pleasing to his heart." That one has always worked well for me, I must say. In ancient Egypt, by Stengel's account, flattering the Pharaoh was the organizing principle of government. The ultimate reward for the flatterer was to be buried near the Great One's tomb, and thereby gain the chance to flatter him for eternity.

Stengel is interesting on the question of whether God likes to be flattered. He offers a pointed reading of the Old Testament to show that the God of the Hebrews was indeed desperate for praise. "Strange to say," he writes, "but Yahweh is a rather insecure fellow." He's peevish, demanding, irrational. He specifies in elaborate detail the kinds of offerings and sacrifices He requires. He punishes poor souls like Job just to show that He can do it. Job's problem, Stengel comments, was that he was "the Unflatterer." He was a loyal employee, a guy with a "Kick Me" sign on his butt who thought he didn't have to make nice with the Almighty. So God put him through Hell.

Stengel gives this frank assessment of God's vanity, as described in the Old Testament: He doesn't even pretend to be fair; "He's a God who plays favorites … He's also very, very touchy …. In His dialogue with Moses, God sounds positively Nixonian. His conversation could have come from the Watergate tapes. 'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them.'" Stengel's explanation: "There's a reason God is insecure; He's the projection of an insecure people." Perhaps, he notes, "the covenant went to the Israelites' heads. They began to flatter themselves that they were special."

The Greeks regarded flattery as poisonous—an insidious political dishonesty that posed the ultimate threat to democracy. The cure for this poison was *parhesia*, or frankness, in which a person shared unpleasant truths with his fellow citizens. Stengel quotes the Greek philosopher Isocrates: "Such frankness is a virtue in a counselor, who must risk the ire of princes foolish enough to be offended when contradicted." The Romans were more worldly and corrupt. Indeed, the spread of flattery might be listed among the causes for Rome's fall. It was pervasive enough that the Roman writer Plutarch penned an essay on the age-old theme, "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend," which included these gems, as summarized by Stengel:

"• Change one's views and opinions abruptly and see if the flatterer will follow ….

• Be aware of whether the individual in question praises your actions or yourself; if he does the latter, he's probably a flatterer ….

• Make a request of a friend and he will say, 'Yes, if I can, it will be done.' Make the same request of a flatterer and he will reply, 'It is done.'"

The ritualized court life of medieval Europe lived on flattery, and it spawned many advice manuals. Machiavelli's *The Prince* was an upmarket example—he included a chapter on "How Flatterers Should be Avoided"—but Stengel prefers a crasser work called *The Courtier* by Castiglione, first printed in 1528. Castiglione's most valuable insight for the modern courtier was a concept he called *spezzatura*, which Stengel translates as "a sophisticated naturalness, a mastery that seems unstudied. What we sometimes call 'cool.'" That, as we know, is the very essence of successful flattery in our age—that hint of irony, that knowingness that makes the flattery seem oblique and unintended, and thus more seductive. It is, as Stengel says, "the art that conceals the art."

The Age of Reason brought a new precision to the analysis of insincerity. Montaigne was fascinated by the subject. Stengel notes his observation that "the beauty of truth is that it has one face," whereas deceit "has a hundred thousand forms, and a field indefinite, without bound or limit." On a less high-minded plane, Stengel cites Montaigne's quotation of Erasmus: "Every man likes the smell of his own dung." Another beacon of the age, the British natural philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, was so intrigued with the topic that he invented a taxonomy, with four categories: "The Ordinary Flatterer," "The Cunning Flatterer," "The Impudent Flatterer," and "The Arch-Flatterer."

But what of American flattery? Of course the courts of Renaissance Europe were obsessed with flattery. We've seen *Shakespeare in Love*. We know they were a bunch of scheming sissies. But what about the honest, plain-vanilla U.S. of A.?

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In our early days, we were indeed an exception. America was the place for people who couldn't abide the ass-kissing and courtly conniving that was required for self-advancement in the Old World. We were a nation of Puritans and adventurers, who came here so we wouldn't have to flatter anyone. Indeed, as Stengel notes, the faith of the Puritans was rooted in the notion that God could not be flattered with the indulgences and saintly interventions that were the stuff of Roman Catholicism, much less through the state-ordained piety of the Anglican Church. The Puritan God had already chosen His elect, and what He despised most was the vanity that imagined that good works—human flattery of God—could get anyone into Heaven.

What's more, flattery was for pansies: "Flattery in America was seen as unmanly," writes Stengel. "Truth was straight and hard and masculine, and anything that departed from it, like flattery, was regarded as effeminate .... You can't flatter the Marlboro Man, and he won't flatter you."

That's the American ideal, to this day. But, dear reader, we flatter ourselves if we imagine that we are immune from this universal and timeless disease. There is a particular modern American form of flattery spawned by our anxious meritocracy: We flatter intellect; we flatter cynicism; we flatter anti-flattery. As Stengel observes, "In a democracy, the courtiers are us. The court is everywhere and everyone is a courtier and everyone is a king." Stengel selects Dale Carnegie as our culture's version of Plutarch and Castiglione. And he offers vivid examples that show why *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is a rawer and shrewder how-to manual than our decadent European friends would ever have dared to write.

Stengel selects Washington, D.C. as one of the capitals of modern flattery—"in some ways closer to the courts of Renaissance Europe than it is to our modern era." As this magazine has been documenting for more than three decades, this is a city of courtiers, with cultural rituals that must be decoded by journo-anthropolgists.

But it must be said that *The Washington Monthly* is losing this battle—especially among the newly dominant elite, the journalists. Government officials become more pale and docile by the year—they're barely worth the trouble to flatter. Who really cares what any member of Congress thinks of you? Or even a cabinet secretary? What devastating blow can Donna Shalala deliver to anyone's career or reputation?

But the journalists grow more fat and viperous by the day. They've steadily been accreting power since Nixon's departure, and through their sublime mix of flattery and back-stabbing, they now rule the town. The court of the media is where the action takes place today, and what a wonderland it is. It's an elite that gets to be anti-elitist; a corps of hypocrites that can fasten on others' hypocrisy; a carnival of flatterers who insist their vocation is asking "tough questions." A clever flatterer in the Washington press corps, with the right haircut and a bit of that essential *spezzatura* ... why there's almost nothing he or she can't hope to accomplish. We could use a modern Castiglione to take their measure, but for now, Stengel's essay will do nicely.

Class Action

The good and the bad alternatives to affirmative action

By Richard D. Kahlenberg

CRITICS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FALL INTO two major camps: those who focus almost exclusively on what they're against (racial preferences), and those who know not only what they oppose, but also what they support. The annihilators are so firmly against the use of race—and see so little merit in the other side—that they are not particularly concerned about what replaces affirmative action. The Manhattan Institute's Abigail Thernstrom, for example, says so long as race is not part of the equation, she does not care how universities decide admission. "They can throw applications down the stairs," she told the U.S. Civil Rights Commissions. "They can have a dart board as far as I'm concerned." The builders, by contrast, see strong competing arguments over affirmative action, and although they come down against the use of race, they spend a good deal of time figuring out alternative ways to achieve important objectives of affirmative action—fairness, equal opportunity, and integration.

CREATING EQUAL: My Fight Against Race Preferences
By Ward Connerly
Encounter Books, $24.00

RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG, *a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, is the author of* The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action.

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Before reading California businessman Ward Connerly's new book, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences*, I had a hunch he was a builder. As a member of the California Board of Regents, he not only fought racial preferences, he also criticized the practice of giving extra points to students who take Advanced Placement courses because those classes are not even available in many low-income high schools. And as a Regent, he supported providing employee benefits to the partners of gay university workers.

My hunch was further confirmed in much of the early part of the book, which recounts Connerly's days growing up as a disadvantaged black child in Louisiana and California in the 1940s and 1950s. Connerly describes how he was abandoned by his father at age two, then lost his mother to a brain tumor at age four. Raised by relatives, he was so poor he had to slide cardboard in his shoes when holes developed. He encountered racism again and again—when his grown uncle was called "boy" by a gas station attendant; when his gym teacher told him blacks couldn't be good swimmers; and when he moved to a white neighborhood and was greeted by a spray-painted sign, "No Niggers Wanted." In college, Connerly worked against discrimination in housing, and he began his career working for a government redevelopment agency. When he helped a young legislator named Pete Wilson draft legislation to encourage housing loans in red-lined neighborhoods, Connerly was told in a meeting with then-Gov. Ronald Reagan that the bill would be vetoed. During Connerly's first months on the university's governing body, he was the only non-student Regent to oppose raising student fees. And in the recent debates over affirmative action, Connerly writes that although he appreciated applause from the conservatives for his rhetoric in favor of colorblindness, "I was also aware that if I had been saying the same things before the same audiences thirty-five years earlier, I would have gotten a far different reception."

As the leader of Proposition 209 to end racial preferences in California in 1996, and Initiative 200 to do the same in Washington state in 1998, Connerly didn't articulate much of an alternative vision, but that presumably reflected the context of a heated sound bite debate. Surely in a full-length book, he would spend some time explaining what he's for.

Well, he spends 12 chapters on his childhood, his early career, and the battles in California, Washington, and now Florida. Finally, on page 268, Connerly endorses the way in which a few universities have formed partnerships with K-12 educators to help prepare more minority students. But the discussion ends two and a half pages later.

No, Connerly is not a builder, and reading *Creating Equal* makes clear why he's not. When you believe you are battling evil, stamping it out is sufficient. Connerly doesn't see any real downside to ending affirmative action and shows little appreciation for how hard this issue is. He sees a strict moral equivalence between racial preferences to help an economically disadvantaged group and Jim Crow laws to perpetuate white supremacy. He calls the consequences of affirmative action "diabolical." He compares the structure of affirmative action to the Berlin Wall. He says he'd abolish all racial data gathering, which puts him to the right of almost everyone since these data are used to enforce anti-discrimination laws as well as preference policies. He uses wildly inappropriate rhetoric to describe defenders of affirmative action. Anti-Prop. 209 consultant Bob Shrum, for example, is likened to Saddam Hussein. Rep. Maxine Waters is accused of having "eaten from the public trough all her life, from her early days on welfare until now as a member of Congress." And the proponents of preferences are called "the heirs of George Wallace and all others who stood in those doorways of the past protecting a corrupt and outmoded way of life." Adding to the inflammatory analogy, Connerly says their cry is "Preferences today! Preferences tomorrow! Preferences forever!" Meanwhile, Connerly compares himself to Martin Luther King Jr.

On a human level, this heated rhetoric may be understandable. Many on the left have been unconscionable in their treatment of Connerly, as *Creating Equal* makes clear. Florida Congresswoman Corinne Brown called Connerly "a freak of nature," while Jesse Jackson called him "strange fruit." The fact that Connerly is in an interracial marriage, a relationship that used to be a sign of a more tolerant future, is used as proof that he's self-hating. California State Sen. Diane Watson, a leader of the Anti-Prop. 209 forces, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Connerly wants to be white. He doesn't like being black. That's why he married a white woman." He was called an Uncle Tom and an "angry Oreo," was pictured in a KKK hood as an "Ethnic Cleanser" in the *Oakland Tribune*, and was called "a lawn jockey for the ruling class" by a prominent, white male supporter of affirmative action. Many in the press simply couldn't understand what would possibly make a black person oppose racial preferences, and *The New York Times*, in an outrageous profile, aired scurrilous rumors put forth by feuding family members that Connerly had been raised to be an anti-black bigot by his grandmother. In the heat of the debate over Initiative 200 in Washington state, opponents of affirmative

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Tidbits & Outrages

Not worth it

A 110-year-old Oklahoman, who was recently crowned the world's oldest man, revealed the secret of his longevity to be eating a big bowl of oatmeal every day and crying as often as possible.

The Father, the Son, and the Middleman

An Italian woman created an agency to rent fathers for those whose busy schedules do not afford them the time to say their own.

Better than Law School

Over 800 college graduates applied this year to be the official driver of Oscar Mayer's promotional car, the Wienermobile 2000, which is in the shape of a giant hotdog.

Mistaken for Shirley MacLaine

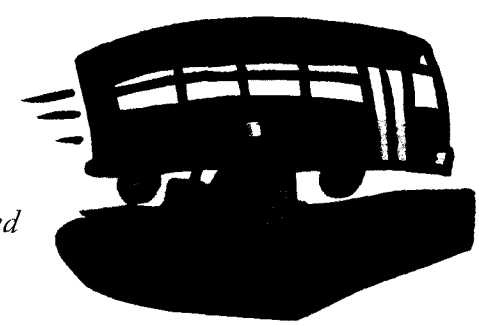
An unemployed Dutch construction worker has ruled nearly 40 villages and more than 100,000 people in Ghana since he was declared to be a reincarnated king.

Extended Coverage

Using her estranged husband's health insurance, a New York City woman arranged to have her lover receive a penile implant.

His wife takes the subway

A Brooklyn school bus driver was arrested after he took children on an eight hour ride. The marathon trip occurred after the driver could not locate the school and refused to stop for directions.



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action were labeled "Nazis" and Vice President Al Gore opined, "The winds of hate are blowing in Washington."

Ward Connerly withstood all this insult and injury and was instrumental in helping expose the mendacity of university officials who said race was a small factor, "a bump," in admissions, when in fact Asians and whites needed to score 7,100 or more out of 8,000 possible points to be admitted to Berkeley while blacks and Hispanics were often admitted with scores of 6,000 or less. Connerly exposed a system under which the University of California at San Diego Medical School made race such a significant factor that the average affirmative action admittee had scores on the Medical College Admissions Test in the lowest one percent when compared with admitted Asian and white students.

Solutions

For a person so influential in dismantling preferences, there must be some obligation, especially in a post-affirmative action world, to participate in dialogue about the future. Three major alternatives have emerged. Some conservatives say we should try to fix K-12 education so that minority and poor children can compete without preference of any kind. Skeptical that such efforts will bear fruit any time soon, a number of states—including Florida, California, and Texas—have moved to a form of geographic affirmative action, where every student who ranks in the top 20 percent (Florida), 10 percent (Texas), or 4 percent (California) of each high school is admitted to a state university—regardless of SAT scores or skin color. A third approach is economic-based affirmative action, where preferences are provided in admissions to low-income children of all races, a disproportionate number of whom are children of color. Obviously, one can favor elements of each of these plans, but in the end there are clear tensions between priorities. Where does Connerly come down in the new debate?

From much of Connerly's rhetoric, one would assume he'd favor an aggressive program of preference for low-income people of all races. In arguing against race preferences he complains that they do nothing to help poor whites, who need "a boost too," and often help less deserving affluent minorities. He writes to Colin Powell, "Under the current system at the University of California, the son of a black four-star general would receive a preference over the daughter of an Asian dishwasher." Connerly says the most effective advertisement in California was one featuring Janice Ingram, a white widow and mother of two young children who was ejected from a vocational re-training class at a California junior college on the basis of race.

But Connerly never endorses class-based affirmative action; in fact, he barely discusses it. When George W. Bush says to him, "Did you see I'm talking about need-based affirmative action now rather than race-based?" Connerly does not tell us what he thinks of Bush's stand. Connerly mentions in passing that voters in Washington state (including 54 percent of union households) supported I-200 while also supporting a large increase in the minimum wage. But he misses the political significance of framing issues in terms of class and not race.

Connerly does not appear particularly enamored of the Florida 20 percent plan. He's concerned that Gov. Jeb Bush was promoting the idea in order to "disarm our effort" to abolish racial preferences through a ballot initiative. But Connerly doesn't take the opportunity to comment more fully on the plan, which has been receiving rave reviews from prominent editorial boards, but is in fact seriously flawed. The geographic plans appear to provide an easy way to promote racial diversity without using race, since black students in all-black high schools may qualify in larger numbers than they would if test scores counted. But Connerly never asks whether it really makes more sense for universities to use admissions standards than to take account of high school grades and indirectly give a leg up to students attending bad schools while ignoring the other 50 percent of what's important: standardized test scores and family environment.

Connerly's silence on this issue is significant because the recent salience of geographic affirmative action plans is taking the wind out of the sails of the much more far-reaching class-based affirmative action alternative. For a brief period, it appeared that the end of affirmative action might give rise to something better—individualized, economic affirmative action. Instead, three leading states have emphasized a class rank approach that takes the radical promise out of the post-affirmative action discussion.

The Story

Though disappointing in its truncated discussion of alternatives, Connerly's book does tell some interesting insider stories about the fight over Prop. 209 (and Washington's Initiative 200) and complements Nicholas Lemann's superb chronicle of the 209 fight in *The Big Test*, which is told primarily from the perspective of opponents of the proposition. Connerly outlines how very close Prop. 209 came to not getting on the ballot at all, had media tycoon Rupert Murdoch not pitched in $1 million to hire signature gatherers.

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He confirms that there was a "tacit understanding" (outlined in Lemann's book) that "the Clintonites would not try to overwhelm us by pouring huge sums into our opponents' war chest and, in return, we would not use their man's flabby support of preferences to campaign against him." And he also helps shed light on the role of big business in supporting affirmative action in initiative battles in California, Washington, and Houston. Businesses not only plowed millions into the opposition coffers (helping opponents in Washington to spend three times the amount of proponents), they also fired employees who favored anti-preference efforts.

Although the initiatives in California and Washington both ended up passing by comfortable margins, Connerly notes how close those races were. Prop. 209 opponents in California made major inroads until they ran an ad linking the initiative to David Duke, a ploy which backfired and, says Connerly, "halted our slide in the polls." Likewise, in Washington state, a 20-point lead shrank to just one point by late October 1998 until initiative proponents began airing ads featuring Katuria Smith, a white woman raised in a low-income single-parent home who'd been hurt by the University of Washington Law School's racial preference system. All sides agree, says Connerly, that this ad was "the coup de grace of the campaign."

Connerly's book raises a central unplumbed curiosity: Why do so many leading Republicans—presidential candidates, members of Congress, and governors—recoil from his anti-preference crusade, despite its success in the polls? The conventional wisdom is that the Republicans are worried about alienating Hispanics and white women—a view that is not supported by polling which finds that values play as important a role as interests in the affirmative action debate. Jeb Bush gives another answer. He tells Connerly he won't support a California-style initiative in Florida because, pointing to a picture of himself surrounded by black children, "I'm committed to helping them." Whether or not Bush is genuine in his sentiment, Republicans surely know that Americans do want to give a leg up to disadvantaged black kids—along with disadvantaged whites like Janice Ingram and Katuria Smith.

Connerly says he was offended by Bush's insinuation that he was the only one committed to poor black kids. "So am I, Governor," the author responds. In writing this book, Ward Connerly had an opportunity to demonstrate precisely what he would do for disadvantaged children. Unfortunately, he missed the chance.

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The Payne Awards are dedicated to honoring journalists and news organizations who make ethical decisions in the face of political or economic pressures.

YEAR 2000 RECIPIENTS

STUDENT JOURNALIST AWARD

The award was presented to Erin Becker, editor-in-chief, and Corey Lewis, managing editor, *The Western Front*, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington, for taking seriously journalists' obligation to maintain autonomy and independence from law enforcement. In the face of strong legal pressure to turn over a tape made by animal rights terrorists who had vandalized campus research labs, they refused, deciding instead to uphold their ethical obligations and to honor the highest professional standards of journalism.

■

INDIVIDUAL JOURNALIST AWARD

News Staff of the *Los Angeles Times*
Bill Boyarsky, city editor, and David Shaw, media critic, accepted the award on behalf of all the editors and reporters who placed their own careers in jeopardy to protect the editorial integrity of their newspaper. Rather than accept a business decision to share profits of a special edition of the newspaper's *Sunday* magazine with a source, the staff stood up for the principles of editorial autonomy and integrity.

■

NEWS ORGANIZATION AWARD

The Union Democrat, Sonora, California
Patty Fuller, editor, and Geoff White, publisher, accepted the award on behalf of *The Union Democrat*. For more than two months in the face of nearly overwhelming, economic, political and competitive pressure, the newspaper refused to follow the lead of major national news organizations and rely on anonymous sources to name suspects in the sensational Yosemite triple murder case. This small *Western Communications* daily newspaper, despite daily competition in their local market, held fast to a company code of ethics that prohibits publication of the names of suspects identified only by anonymous sources.

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Table for One, Please

America's disintegrating democracy

By Curtis Gans

IN THIS ERA OF AMERICAN SELF-congratulation—for winning the Cold War, establishing American pre-eminence as the world's foremost military and economic power, the "longest peacetime economic expansion" in American history, record levels of employment unaccompanied by high inflation, budget surpluses, reduced crime rates, decreased air and water pollution, the ability of an ever-increasing percentage of Americans to spend an ever-increasing percentage of their savings on an endless variety of non-essential consumer goods, and their pursuit of the bitch-goddess of wealth with abandon and without shame or apology—there is an underlying dirty little secret:

BOWLING ALONE:
The Collapse and Revival of American Community
by Robert D. Putnam
Simon & Schuster, $26.00

The underpinnings of American democracy that helped produce all this are coming apart.

For nearly the past 25 years, I have been looking at one aspect of this problem—the growing disinclination of Americans to vote and otherwise participate in the political life of their nation. Every biennium American politics seems to produce new modern records for citizen political disengagement. And every year, the nation seems further and further from the political comity, cohesion, and consensus that makes possible the constructive address of citizen needs. In the 1998 election, only 11 percent of the 18-19 year olds eligible to vote for the first time bothered to go to the polls. The United States now stands 139th out of 163 democracies in the rate of voter participation. And the nation that prides itself on being the best example of government of, for, and by the people is rapidly becoming a nation whose participation is limited to the interested or zealous few.

Five years ago, in an article entitled "Bowling Alone" in an obscure publication, Robert D. Putnam expanded this discussion beyond the boundaries of political engagement by arguing that the entire spectrum of social connectedness in interpersonal, civic, and social life in America was eroding. His title was drawn from his finding that while bowling as an activity had not diminished in popularity, what had diminished substantially was league bowling, as emblematic of many more important activities that Americans were doing in isolation rather than in conjunction with others.

Prior to that article, Putnam was a respected, if not widely known, Harvard professor who had published a minimally read but highly honored book on Italian social connectedness. "Bowling Alone" took certain elites by storm. Putnam was invited to discuss his findings with foundation executives, institutional leaders, and the President of the United States. He was showered with grants to expand his article into a book and to conduct a series of seminars to elaborate on his initial findings with a high-level group of peers. Putnam also spawned a small industry of detractors, led by the late Everett Carll Ladd, who suggested that if one looked in other directions—toward continued high levels of church attendance, the proliferation of new political and social organizations, increased charitable giving, and a recent increase in volunteerism—the social state of America was not as bad as Putnam made it out to be.

Five years later, after exhaustive research including into the data that Ladd had used to debunk Putnam's theory, *Bowling Alone* is now a formidable book, which, through the overwhelming weight of evidence he has amassed, demolishes this set of criticisms.

He does not deny any of his critics' assertions—that church attendance is still at a high level, the number of political and social organizations has mushroomed, many more dollars are being donated to charitable organizations, volunteerism is on the rise among the old and the young, and there are many communities which still retain a high degree of community engagement.

But against this small catalogue of Pollyannaish propositions, Putnam has arrayed an imposing set of contrary and depressing evidence:

• Not only has there been a 25 percent decline in voting, but also a 50 percent decline in political involvement as measured by campaign activities

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engaged in over the last four decades. In 1973, a majority of Americans signed a petition, made a speech, wrote an article, or sent a letter to a public official or to the editor of a newspaper. By 1994, a majority engaged in none of these activities.

• Despite a proliferation of social, civic, and fraternal organizations during the last two and a half decades, a modest decline (16 percent) in membership in those organizations as a totality and a 50 percent decline (between 1973-1994) in active participation, as measured by those who took any leadership role, has occurred. In 1973, two-thirds of Americans attended at least one organizational or club meeting a year. By the late 1990s, two-thirds of all Americans did not attend any.

• There has been a profound change in the nature of organizational activity in which grassroots membership has been replaced by professionalized national staffs, and local activity and organizational sinew has been supplanted by the giving of money as the sole form of organizational identification.

• There has been a small decline (10 percent) in church attendance (composed of a substantial increase in attendance at fundamentalist churches and a concomitant steady decline among other denominations), but a 25-50 percent decline in active involvement in church-related activities. Membership in church-related groups has dropped by 50 percent between the 1950s and the 1990s.

• The percentage of the work force that is unionized has declined from 32.5 to 14.1, despite a substantial numeric increase in the number of Americans who belong to various professional associations; a noticeable decline in the percentage of professionals who join such associations; and a workplace, which, by virtue of downsizing, conglomeration, and telecommuting (among the artifacts of the modern competition for maximum profit), provides for a smaller amount of cohesion, personal economic security, and durable interpersonal relations.

• Despite an increase in the total amount citizens give to charity, there has been a substantial decline in the percentage of both citizenry and the portion of their income devoted to philanthropy and charity; and an erosion in volunteering among every age category, save the old (imbued with another generation's values and armed with this generation's advances in medical science and available leisure time) and the young (propelled somewhat by the adoption of compulsory service programs in some school systems).

• Add to this list: declines in marriage, eating together or discussing anything as a family, entertaining friends at home, participating in group games, social or sporting activities, and interpersonal as well as political trust; and increases in divorce, suicide, watching television and spectator sports, and time spent in solitary commuting or surfing the Internet, among other social indicators—and what emerges is a picture of American society, on levels from family to nation, which has become, over four decades, fragmented, atomized, and lacking the social capital for investment in societal betterment.

Putnam is also convincing when he argues, with evidence, that social capital matters—that a whole range of social good, including education, child welfare, safe neighborhoods, economic prosperity, health, personal satisfaction, and vibrant democracy depend on interconnectedness among citizens. Volunteerism is not, according to Putnam, a substitute for politics, but rather that the person who is politically interested is one who is more likely to volunteer. Charitable giving comes most from those who have connections to and a stake in community.

Putnam is, however, less convincing in other parts of this book. Perhaps because he is, first and foremost, a quantitative political scientist or, perhaps, more likely, because he had to amass an enormous amount of evidence to present his case and silence his critics, Putnam seems compelled to attempt to quantify everything.

He attempts to create a percentage pie chart of why the societal disconnect exists, attributing about 10 percent to women in the work force, robbing the community of what had historically been a vital source of voluntarism; about a tenth to suburban sprawl—to community-spread, non-engaging strip malls, and enormous time spent commuting; about 30 percent to the atomizing and fragmenting effects of modern communications, making citizens passive spectators and diminishing, through cable satellite and the Internet, their body of shared information; and the largest portion to generational change, in which each succeeding generation, beginning with those born after World War II, is less involved than their predecessors.

But such an analysis does not explain why each generation has a lower level of involvement than their forebearers. It ignores other contributing factors, including but not limited to the role of leadership, beginning with Johnson and Nixon, in eroding trust; the shocks to our political system beginning with Vietnam, which undermined faith in the wisdom of government; the shifts in citizen values away from engagement and toward self-seeking and libertarian consumer choice; the changes in the content of the

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media toward cynicism and lack of seriousness; major modifications in the content and quality of education; and the decline of many basic societal and political institutions which provided the glue for engagement as cause as well as effect. Nor does such a quantification elucidate the obvious, that the present disengagement is a product of various causes interacting with each other. Television, for instance, changed the way political parties conduct their business, but the new political party—by conducting campaigns through television that are off-putting to the average citizen—is a cause of demobilization as well as an effect of the age of television. The whole cannot be parsed so easily.

But the least convincing part of Putnam's treatise is his section on remedy. He devotes a long chapter to recounting the history of the Progressive period at the turn of the last century, suggesting in the process that the actions of leaders, citizens, and journalists, which produced an enormous and completed agenda of durable reform, might be replicated now. And he offers a menu of recommendations for the present which are at the same time unexceptionable and tepid, including: civic education and community service for the young, a more congenial and community-friendly workplace, the building of new communities with an eye toward citizen interaction, strengthening of ecumenical faith-based churches and organizations, reducing the time citizens spend in front of the TV and enhancing programming which promotes community engagement, using the arts to create communal activities, campaign finance reform, and devolving powers to local government.

On one hand, it is hard to see how this menu of reform is commensurate with reintegrating a society fragmented by concrete and communications, rebuilding the integrating and mobilizing institutions which have decayed over the last four decades, or restoring a trust shattered by decades of shoddy politics and journalism. And, on the other, it is hard to compare a period in which there was real, perceived, and widely shared grievance to propel action—segregation, slums, child labor, worker exploitation, xenophobia, disenfranchisement of women, to name but a few—and this period in which the majority of Americans are unaware of any crisis at all.

These caveats notwithstanding, this book is to be read and kept as a reference. There is no place, in my knowledge, where so much about the current disconnectedness of American society has been uncovered, assembled, and presented as in the text, charts, and notes within this book. And while we still await remedy for the American crisis of disconnection and disengagement from someone less rooted in academia and more emboldened to propose coercive solutions, this book will be a major resource in that effort.

The First Woman

She has to be sweet as Barbie and tough as Attila

By Myra MacPherson

As we enter the 21st century, facts do not augur well for any woman who aims to become president of the United States. There are only nine women in the Senate and only three female governors—major ticket-punching political "farm clubs" that provide the credentials and name recognition to run for the presidency.

MADAM PRESIDENT
Shattering the Last Glass Ceiling
by Tom Brazaitis and Eleanor Clift
Scribner, $26.00

Money is hard to come by for women, despite the success of Emily's List—a fund-raising organization that has supported women candidates including former Texas Gov. Ann Richards and Sen. Barbara Mikulski. Given the obscene millions needed for presidential campaigns, as one male operative says, "Emily's List is chump change." Put that together with a major gender-bender—a reluctance on the part of both women and men to support a woman for high office—and it is one rough slog.

In theory it should be easier. One Democratic poll showed that 90 percent of respondents would vote for a woman candidate for president. (Interestingly, women without college educations are the most supportive, but the authors of *Madam President* unfortunately neglect to explain why.)

But it turns out that people tend to tell pollsters one thing and then act differently when confronted by flesh-and-blood candidates. In practice, the woman candidate

MYRA MACPHERSON *is the author of* The Power Lovers: An Intimate Look at Politicians and their Marriages.

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faces an impossibly high standard. She is expected to be a female version of God—if God isn't, in fact, a woman.

So what's a woman to do? Eleanor Clift and Tom Brazaitis look at the past, present, and future of women in politics in their examination of the quest for Madam President. The disheartening conclusion is that the first female candidate will have to be safe, mainstream, and conventional. No boat rockers, the likes of John McCain, need apply.

These two journalists—a husband and wife team—are inside-the-beltway veterans (Clift: "The McLaughlin Group" panelist and contributing editor for *Newsweek*, Brazaitis: Washington editor and columnist for *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*). The book reflects their bent. They drive the middle of the road with conventional wisdom as their HOV passenger. For example, they write that presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole was spurned by the Republican establishment in favor of "another moderate, [George W.] Bush." There are a lot of adjectives that fit Bush—anti-choice, pro-big business, pro-death penalty, pro-polluters, pro-guns—but moderate isn't one of them.

That said, the book is a valuable compendium of facts and solid reporting for those interested in this subject. It's best when the women politicians speak for themselves. The litany of sexist assaults they've had to endure is a drum beat far more effective than moralizing.

Opponents have used every gender attack against them—from whisper campaigns that they are lesbians if single, to ads that characterize them as neglectful mothers and wives if they are married. The authors point out that reporters emphasized that Liddy Dole was childless, but that they never mentioned Pat Buchanan's childlessness, although both were excessive proponents of family values.

The authors note that Texas Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, who openly wants to run for the presidency, "could be the model for the Senator Barbie doll." Her "ultra feminine qualities have served her well in a state where good ol' boys hold sway." Yet Hutchison stood up to the boys' club with humor when she pushed for state insurance coverage for mammograms. When Hutchison discovered that penile implants to treat sexual impotence were among the covered procedures, she threatened to expose the double standard. The male legislators quickly added the mammogram benefit.

Like other female Republican office holders, she has been better on women's issues than her male counterparts, but Hutchison does not relish feminist battles. For example, she persuaded a female colleague not to file a complaint against Strom Thurmond, the ancient senator who groped and grabbed her whenever she passed his desk.

California Sen. Diane Feinstein tops the Clift-Brazaitis list as the female politician with the best combination of experience, temperament—coupled with her home state's huge electoral prize—to become a vice-presidential pick or to run for the presidency. She was tough enough to face down the NRA and push through a ban on military type semiautomatic assault guns as a freshman senator in 1994. But she had to endure mean personal attacks to get there. In the 1990 primary, opponents compared Feinstein to Leona Helmsley, write the authors, "equating convicted tax cheat Helmsley's crimes with campaign-reporting allegations." Feinstein also felt a "very subtle anti-Semitism" was at play in the ad that linked her with haughty Helmsley.

When New Jersey Republican Gov. Christine Todd Whitman appointed her state's first woman attorney general and the first female African-American secretary of state, men grumped that the statehouse was becoming an "estrogen palace."

Whitman has earned enemies in the GOP by being a liberal on social issues and pro-choice (with some flip-flopping on issues like partial-term abortions). She says women govern differently because of their different life experiences. "If you give a woman a choice between capital construction for a bridge or for a halfway house for troubled teenagers, we'll go for the halfway house first. That's not because we don't understand the importance of infrastructure repair, but we tend to focus on the human side first." Yet Whitman does not always follow such pronouncements. As Clift and Brazaitis write: "Her orders to privatize state functions displaced workers and caused economic disruption to those least able to rebound."

The trouble with gender generalizations is that female politicians are not monolithic, any more than the women who may or may not vote for them. Just being a woman is not enough; female voters seldom vote for women whose stands do not fit theirs. There are certain commonalities, women's issues, and concerns that bond female politicians on both sides of the aisle, although pro-choice considerations can be a sticking point for some Republican and Catholic women. Yet others stand up to their party and church and are pro-choice.

Generational differences are often at play, with younger women being more assertive. Maryland's Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend insisted on a guarantee that she would not be a ceremonial token before taking the post. "Townsend was granted extraordinary authority," write the authors. Three cabinet secretaries reported directly to her and she oversaw spending for public safety.

The obvious heart of the problem for this book is

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Capitol Repair Ki

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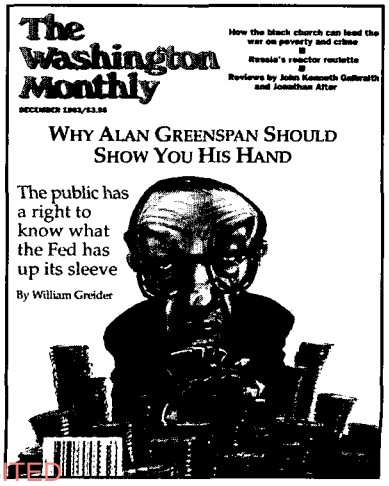

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the lack of women to write about, historically and currently, which makes for thin reading. For example, only 18 women had served in the Senate for 200 years before Barbara Mikulski's breakthrough win in 1986—and only three of those 18 were elected in their own right. The rest got there by virtue of widow's weeds, filling their dead husbands' terms until male replacements could be found. A dumb male took precedence over a bright woman.

As a result, the authors serve up pages on networking efforts to elect women and profile nationally unknown state office holders; it seems like ho-hum padding. They also devote 41 pages to Geraldine Ferraro's 1984 historic first as a major vice-presidential candidate when half that number would do. After all, the bottom line is pretty straightforward: When the ticket failed, Ferraro was blamed, not Mondale. The race spawned an unfortunate legacy—the "Ferraro Hangover"—which has since become a rationale for keeping women off the ticket.

The authors observe that one implicit rule for women candidates is that they can be attractive but not sexy, because being sexy is threatening to voters. They take a critical look at the media's proclivity for describing and defining female candidates by their looks and their clothes. Unfortunately, Clift and Brazaitis then do exactly the same thing by describing their subjects in language that could be used to describe a maturing *Cosmo* girl: "bright eyed and youthful at 58 ... ," " ... her honeyed hair teased into a Texas-sized frame around her fine features ... ," "her bouncy shoulder-length hair and dimples ... ," "she wore a slate blue dress and matching shoes ... ," "a no-nonsense redhead ..." What is the opposite of a no-nonsense redhead? A nonsense blonde? (As if these phrases weren't cloying enough, the authors indulge in cutesy chapter titles such as "Pastel Power.")

The book also fails to sort out the schizophrenia that takes over when the attributes of a successful female candidate are discussed. She is supposed to be tough, "while not surrendering her inborn empathy" as the authors put it. She is supposed to be a warm and fuzzy comfort but reckless enough to fight silly little wars, à la Margaret Thatcher. The authors write, in fact, that voters want an American version of Thatcher. What is disturbing is that they do not challenge that view. Given that Thatcher herself aped a male idol, Ronald Reagan, and that her draconian measures sent the working class to the poor house, her "toughness" is hardly a laudable act to follow. As Gloria Steinem says, beware of a politician who "looks like us, and acts like them."

The biggest disappointment in this book, however, is the cop-out last chapter titled, "A How-to for Women." Michael Shaheen, a "media training guru" who coaches Clinton and Gore, was "happy to share his advice for a would-be Madam President." His seminar is titled: "Husbands, Hemlines and Hairdos." To borrow from Dorothy Parker, this reader frow'd up.

His advice is simplistically insulting to any woman with the ambition, courage, and smarts to climb that far: "Highlight executive experience, do your homework [he is high on studying Margaret Thatcher], project a warm friendly image, put women in charge in your campaign, highlight your handling of a crisis, inspire true believers, come from the right state [big, with many electoral votes], exude high wattage [formerly known as charisma], listen to focus groups." In other words, be like the men and trim your ideas accordingly to do whatever it takes to win.

And, of course, Shaheen lists "family matters." The gist of this category is that it helps to have one.

Ann Richards makes a keen observation when she says, "I don't understand why we continue to trivialize ourselves—no matter how smart, you have to keep up the wife and mother image—that you're keeping the house clean, and giving parties when women have no more time to do all that than men do who fill those jobs. Continuing to talk about how women do it and raise a family just continues to make those questions seem important and they're not."

Don't count on the media for help in that department. Remember the flap about Hillary (perhaps the first crossover political wife to try for the presidency if she wins her Senate race) not being a cookie baker, which was fueled by the media? Although the kitchen is no doubt a foreign country to Liddy Dole, she dutifully brought her mother's pecan cookie recipe to the Rosie O'Donnell show even though their topic was gun control.

Perhaps the best advice is to ignore all the "shoulds" and stand for something.

Shirley Chisholm ran for president in 1972 and never got more than 7 percent of the vote in the 12 primaries in which she ran. But Chisholm, who said she met far more discrimination as a woman than as a black, was a passionate and articulate voice for her causes, federal spending for social programs, and cuts in defense spending. Her stands on civil rights and human rights inspired many.

"When you make a bid for such a high office," she said, "you have to be very outspoken and assertive and not be afraid to offend people."

Her legacy of guts and honesty should be remembered. They are far more worthy goals than winning hollow victories.

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Political Booknotes

Tear Down This Wall

By Christopher Buckley

UNTIL NOW, PETER ROBINSON has been one of the lesser-known of George Bush's and Ronald Reagan's speech writers, but with this sprightly and amusing book, that may change. He has an honest, uncomplicated, almost naive prose style and appears not to have a mean bone in his body, which really ought to disqualify him from writing about politics. But don't let this Jimmy Stewart quality fool you: Robinson is a shrewd inside player, who has been not only wordsmith to the above, but also a cherub-faced consigliere to the Dark Lord himself, Rupert Murdoch, as well as assistant to the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Currently, he perches at the Hoover Institute at Stanford. This book comes with enthusiastic imprimaturs and nihil obstats by Tom Wolfe, William F. Buckley Jr., Peggy Noonan, P.J. O'Rourke, Andrew Ferguson and Morley Safer. All that is missing is an official endorsement by The Skulls. Since we are obviously dealing with the vast right-wing conspiracy here, I might as well disclose that I hired young Peter Robinson of *The* (notorious) *Dartmouth Review* to replace me as speech writer to Vice President George Bush in 1982.

Robinson's book is what its subtitle says it is: one man's attempt to come to terms with a question that has baffled philosophers since the days of Aristotle, namely, what does it mean to be a Republican today? Why are some people cradle-to-grave Republicans? Why are others, conspicuously the majority of Jews, blacks, and Hollywood stud muffins, not?

He calls his inquiry a "travel book," in which he criss-crosses the country from New York City, Jersey City, Washington, D.C., Seattle, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Fresno to elsewhere, talking to such grandees and worthies as Gov. George Bush, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Reps. Henry Hyde and Christopher Cox, former California Gov. Pete Wilson, Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler, GOP consultant Arthur Finkelstein, New York Mayor Rudy Giuiliani, and many others. His style of asking almost simple yet profound questions makes him sometimes sound like the eager young pachyderm in Rudyard Kipling's Just So Story, "How The Elephant Got Its Trunk."

IT'S MY PARTY: A Republican's Messy Love Affair with the GOP
by Peter Robinson
Warner Books, $24

He finds out a great deal about the GOP's trunk, returning from his peregrinations with penetrating answers that should occasion some hard thinking among (us) elephants, about who we are, where we are going, and whether we have to change planes in Chicago. Chapters deal unflinchingly with such GOP hot zones as the media, Hollywood, the South, women, abortion, gun control, and Hispanics. This book reads like an instruction manual in how to make a bigger tent. It is therefore an important book, and all Republicans should, as they say, check it. Dems, too, if they want to know what the enemy is up to.

Robinson also has some piquant anecdotes to relate about his time at the White House, one in particular that reveals the toughness beneath the small town Mr. Smith who came to Washington. Reading it made my ideological blood, since cooled, begin boiling all over again.

In 1987 he traveled to Berlin with the White House advance party, having been assigned the speech that President Reagan would give in front of the Berlin Wall. He interviewed the ranking U.S. diplomat in Berlin to get his ideas about what Reagan should say. The diplomat, who could barely be bothered to see him, tried to brush him off with some State Department tapioca about how there should be more air routes into Berlin and what a jolly good idea it was that Berlin should host the Olympics. Above all, the dip cautioned, the President must not mention the Wall, since "[t]he people of Berlin had long ago gotten used to it."

Robinson then did something unusual, namely seek out some actual Berliners. He asked them if they'd gotten used to the wall. They nearly choked on their sausages and told him, in no uncertain terms, about the anguish of their divided families. It seemed that they had not "gotten used" to the Berlin Wall.

Robinson wrote into the speech the line, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" This is, you will recognize, one of Ronald Reagan's most quoted lines. When he dies, it might make paragraph two of his obituary.

But back to 1987. You'll already have anticipated what happened: the Berlin diplomat, the State Department, the National Security Council, the White House staff all went bananas. Was Peter Robinson crazy? Take it out! Out, out! But he would not take it out. Among other reasons, the Leader of the Free World kind of liked the line.

The incident escalated, with 30-year-old Robinson going toe-to-toe with, among others, National Security Council Director Colin Powell. (It was disappointing to read this.) Finally, Reagan had to say to his chief of staff, Kenneth Duberstein, with a trace of Reaganesque irony, Look here, old shoe, who's President here? Even skilled White House-hand Duberstein had to back down. Reagan went on to deliver the line. The rest is history.

Morals? (1) Tell it like it is. (2) What (the hell) is it with these pin-striped Nellies, anyway? (3) When Colin Powell comes up before the Senate for his confirmation hearings as George W. Bush's Secretary of State, someone ought to ask him about the incident and see what other delicate sensibilities he wouldn't want to upset as SecState.

Why do most people feel so strongly about their party affiliation? The answer is that man is a tribal creature. He craves a communal identity, whether it derives from the GOP or Democrats, Yankees or Red Sox, Bloods or the Crips. All of us have relatives who would be physically, never mind psychologically, incapable of pulling a Republican or Democrat lever inside the poll booth. I have a friend who actually waited until

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his mother had died before he allowed himself to vote Republican—it would have killed her. You probably know someone like this yourself. "At any given time," Robinson notes, "political scientists estimate, only about 20 percent of voters belong to a party other than the one in which they grew up."

By the end of Robinson's travels, he finds that "nearly every person with whom I spoke was able to articulate reasons for being a Republican. A belief in individual responsibility. The conviction that any government that absorbs a full one-fifth of the goods and services its citizens produce is too big and too intrusive. The desire to see American military might remain unassailable, even in the post-Cold War world. An eagerness to bring market forces to bear on social problems, introducing voucher programs, for example, to improve our schools, or replacing welfare with workfare."

Finally, he says, "It stands for principles that I myself share. I figure that somehow or other I owe it a little emotional involvement." It's refreshing to hear a sentiment as transparent as this, especially from someone who's gone toe-to-toe with Colin Powell in the West Wing over whether the President of the United States ought to come out in public against the Berlin Wall.

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY's *latest novel is* Little Green Men.

Up In Arms

By Mark Strauss

THERE HAVE BEEN NO WEAPONS inspectors in Iraq since December 1998. If that statement doesn't scare the crap out of you, it should. Although most of Saddam Hussein's arsenal of mass destruction has been accounted for and destroyed, he's had 18 months to rebuild it. The full extent of his biological weapons program remains a mystery, and there is evidence that the Iraqi dictator is hoarding supplies of the nerve gas VX—a substance so toxic that a single warhead of it could kill up to one million people. The United States and its Gulf War allies spent $61 billion to drive Saddam from Kuwait and box him in with UN Security Council Resolutions. Maybe it's time to ask for a refund.

Whenever a monumental foreign policy screw-up occurs, there's an inevitable rush to "investigate the truth," assign blame, and offer up a sacrificial lamb. In the case of Iraq, one lamb-of-choice has been Richard Butler, the Australian diplomat who in 1997 took over from Rolf Ekeus as head of the now-defunct United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) tasked with disarming Iraq. In his book *Endgame*, Scott Ritter—the chief inspector of UNSCOM who resigned in August 1998—portrays his former boss as a Clinton administration puppet, declaring that "Butler appeared to have forgotten that he was a servant of the Security Council, not the United States." With the smell of Butler's blood in the water, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan joined the feeding frenzy. Although Annan did not personally criticize his former colleague, the Secretary-General's inner circle of advisers anonymously leaked unflattering stories to the press that characterized Butler as a vulgar roughneck who had allowed UNSCOM to get out of control.

THE GREATEST THREAT: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security
by Richard Butler
Public Affairs, $26.00

It was only a matter of time before Butler weighed in with his side of the story. His book, *The Greatest Threat*, chronicles the decline and fall of UNSCOM during his tenure as executive chairman. Readers expecting an angry, tell-all memoir will be disappointed. This book is not "Richard Butler Responds to His Critics." Instead, he prefers to let the facts (as he saw them) speak for themselves and offers a dispassionate analysis of how the United Nations undermined the efforts of its own weapons inspectors.

Butler devotes fewer than 10 pages to addressing the most serious charges leveled against him. Among the most prominent of those allegations was Scott Ritter's claim that the CIA had infiltrated UNSCOM and that the United States had used evidence gathered by the weapons inspectors to select bombing targets in Baghdad. While Butler doesn't hide behind excuses along the lines of Al Gore's "no controlling legal authority," he comes perilously close. "Is it possible that some UNSCOM data, without my knowledge, made its way into the vast hopper of information used in U.S. military targeting?" he asks. "Maybe," he responds. Having offered that mother-of-all caveats, Butler goes on to explain that the United States, which possesses spy satellites that can practically read license plates from 50 miles in orbit, likely had little use for a small-shop operation such as UNSCOM. "If anything," he notes, "we at UNSCOM coveted the highly advanced intelligence data the Americans owned." Butler, in fact, blames Ritter for handing the Iraqis a propaganda tool that they used to great effect in their ongoing diplomatic offensive to reign in UNSCOM.

As for Ritter's other allegation—that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger unduly influenced UNSCOM on the scope and timing of weapons inspections—Butler offers a categorical denial. "Senior U.S. officials never crossed the clear line between saying what they thought would be best, on the one hand, and seeking to give me directions, on the other," he notes. Indeed, far more significant than what Butler says about U.S. policy makers is what he doesn't say about them. Clinton administration officials are peripheral actors throughout his narrative, which seems odd in light of the central role they played in orchestrating international policy toward Iraq. It's hard not to get the impression that Butler is going out of his way to show there was no U.S. influence.

With the United States consigned to the background, Butler focuses most of his narrative on the Byzantine politics at the UN. He recounts how three permanent members of the Security Council—France, China, and Russia—were becoming increasingly impatient with UNSCOM's "failure" to wrap up its work and clear the way for the lifting of sanctions. The Russians, as far as Butler was concerned, had become Iraq's *de facto* surrogate on the Security Council—driven by a desire to recoup the $8 billion that Iraq still owed them for military equipment. (Also, Butler learned by way of

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"reliable intelligence reports," that then-Russian Foreign Minister Yevegeny Primakov was receiving personal payoffs from the Iraqi regime.)

Butler, however, reserves some of his harshest criticism for Kofi Annan, whom he portrays as a Neville Chamberlainesque figure, often more intent on defusing potential military conflict with Iraq than on verifying the destruction of Saddam Hussein's arsenal. With painstaking (and sometimes painful) attention to detail, Butler parses the words of one UN document after another, revealing how UNSCOM's authority was gradually whittled away. Moreover, Butler came to realize that Annan's inner circle of advisers had grown increasingly distrustful of UNSCOM, since it didn't conform to proper UN culture. "Simply put, they couldn't bear the unusual—and essential—degree of independence we enjoyed."

Butler himself became the trigger man for terminating UNSCOM. His December 1998 report detailing Saddam's continued intransigence led to the U.S.-led bombing of Iraq ("Operation Desert Fox") and the final expulsion of UN weapons inspectors. To fill the void left by the dissolution of UNSCOM, the UN Security Council created the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) in December 1999. A better name for it might have been "UNSCOM Lite"—the executive chairman of the agency must submit any significant policy decision for advice and consent to a college of commissioners. So much for an independent arms control agency.

As Butler warns, these commissioners "would not be technical experts but rather diplomats appointed by governments ... in short, political commissars." Meanwhile, Saddam still won't allow UN inspectors back into Iraq (he was apparently unmoved by the UN resolution dictating that UNMOVIC staff must be given "cultural training" to be more "sensitive" to Iraqi feelings).

Looking back upon the death of UNSCOM, Butler understandably worries about the precedent Iraq might set for other nations who now see how easy it is to cheat on arms-control agreements and get away with it. He argues that since each permanent member of the UN Security Council has veto power, it is all but impossible to guarantee that any international arms control treaty will ever be credibly enforced. In this context he proposes the formation of a "United Nations Council on Weapons of Mass Destruction"—the members of which would pledge never to use their veto power. It's difficult to fault Butler's reasons for creating such an organization, but his own narrative suggests that it won't work. Nations could not overcome their narrow self-interests to destroy the arsenal of Saddam Hussein, a dictator who invaded a neighboring country and used chemical weapons against his own people. What hope is there then that these same nations would ever empower any organization to enforce arms control agreements against themselves?

MARK STRAUSS *is Senior Editor of* Foreign Policy *magazine.*

Starr Lite

By Stephen Pomper

MOST EVERYBODY TOOK SIDES on Monicagate, and if you want to know where Susan Schmidt and Michael Weisskopf came out just look in the index of *Truth at Any Cost.*

TRUTH AT ANY COST: Ken Starr and the Unmaking of Bill Clinton
by Susan Schmidt and Michael Weisskopf
Harper Collins, $26.00

Under "Clinton, William Jefferson" we've got such reference points as "'bimbo eruptions' investigators, and," "golf score shaving," "manipulative personality of," and, of course, "philandering and sexual advances to women, history of." For Ken Starr, typical examples include "reverence for the law," "perfectionism," and—just in case Clinton's entry wasn't comprehensive—"knowledge of Clinton's philandering while Governor of Arkansas."

But hey—there's nothing wrong with a book that looks at things from Ken Starr's perspective. After all, Jeffrey Toobin took Bill Clinton's side in *A Vast Conspiracy*, and Gene Lyons and Joe Conason rose even more passionately to his defense in *The Hunting of the President.* There's a lot that could be learned from a book that tilts the other way—and particularly from a book by two seasoned reporters who both covered Monicagate as it unfolded (Schmidt for *The Washington Post* and Weisskopf for *Time*). Add to that the remarkable access that Schmidt and Weisskopf had to Starr and 25 of his investigators—who sat for more than 200 hours of interviews—and you have the potential for a very revealing book.

And sure enough there is some revealing information here. There's new color on the inner workings of the Starr team—it turns out they're somewhat less Neanderthalish than the thugs and nincompoops portrayed in less sympathetic treatments. And at the very end there's an affecting portrait of Starr weeping into his hands as he draws a parallel between his own lonely battle and his father's losing fight against cancer. Starr knows his failings and suffers for them, which is part of what makes him so appealing to the authors. He was an inexperienced prosecutor, yes, and public relations bumbler, sure—but he was also a good man trying to do the right thing.

Well, maybe. Unfortunately, *Truth at Any Cost* doesn't give us all that's required to make that case. It buries the reader in a series of detail-driven sketches apparently intended to show how a group of basically decent guys (they were mostly guys) were driven bananas by a relentless delay and smear campaign orchestrated out of the White House. But having done what it can in that department, the book tends to punt on the big questions that tarnish the prosecutors' reputations.

The biggest question is how the prosecutors ended up in cahoots with Linda Tripp. By now it's no secret that Tripp and right-wing literary agent Lucianne Goldberg were playing the prosecutors in order to work up material for a book. They set up the president by telling the Paula Jones lawyers about his affair with Lewinsky so they could question him about it in his deposition. Then they alerted Starr's people so they could monitor Clinton while he lied under oath—which he obligingly did. If Starr had known about all of these machinations he should have mentioned the possibility that he was in fact being used when he first went to the Justice Department to request jurisdiction over the Lewinsky affair. But, the authors say,

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he just didn't know of any connection between Tripp and Jones' people.

Why on earth not? It's not as if Tripp dropped out of the sky. Starr's man Paul Rosenzweig learned about her from a law school friend named Jerome Marcus who had previously worked on a brief urging the Supreme Court to let Paula Jones sue the president. Marcus' involvement with the Supreme Court brief on behalf of Jones should have been a clue that he was more than casually interested in Clinton's fate: Private sector lawyers, being busy people, are not the most likely of Supreme Court *amici* unless they have an ax to grind. Furthermore, Marcus tipped off Rosenzweig at a midweek dinner in Philadelphia where two other out-of-town lawyers also just happened to show up. It has since emerged that all of Rosenzweig's dinner partners were volunteering their time and services to the Paula Jones legal team. But this book tells us Rosenzweig had no idea they were working for Jones at the time.

It sounds so incredibly much like a setup you can't help but wonder how Rosenzweig could have avoided suspecting that something was up. Or why he didn't ask any questions that would have helped him figure out what was going on. Or why nobody else on Starr's staff did a little legwork to find out where this great lead came from. Schmidt and Weisskopf take this deplorable lack of curiosity at face value and so the issue—which is really at the heart of the question of whether Starr or any of his people were part of a larger effort to bring down the President—comes and goes with only the most casual inspection.

The other issue that Schmidt and Weisskopf give less than insightful treatment is Starr's relationship with the press. To be sure, the authors offer us an earful about Starr's infamous interview with Steve Brill for the maiden issue of *Brill's Content*. In his write-up of that interview, Brill argued that Starr's office was using leaks—including illegal leaks of grand jury testimony—in order to turn journalists into "a cheering section" for "a prosecutor in search of a crime." He also suggested that Starr had admitted to these leaks in their interview. As Schmidt and Weisskopf amply report, Starr later denied this and argued that his words had been manipulated. Several journalists quoted in Brill's story—including Schmidt—also denied statements that Brill attributed to them.

But that's old news. What would be interesting to know is: What was leaked, by whom, and why? Schmidt, whose leading coverage of the Monica story reflected a strong working relationship with Starr's office, would seem to be a good source on this question, but the book dodges it. We learn only that "Starr left press contacts to his aides" and "couldn't monitor every conversation they had with reporters to know whether they leaked grand jury material."

Oh well, opportunity lost. Schmidt's colleague, Peter Baker, has his own Monicagate book coming out this fall. Maybe we'll get some of the answers then.

The Truman Show

By Paul Duke

When I arrived in Washington as a young reporter in 1957, Harry Truman was the country's most reviled political figure. Democrats barely acknowledged him as one of their own and Republicans scorned his presidency as a mishmash of bumbling, scandals, and wrongheaded politics.

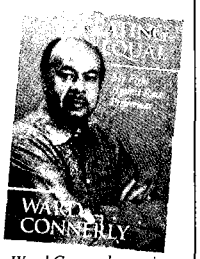
Indeed, it would be another decade before this dreary cacophony would start to subside and Truman would begin his rise into the pantheon of illustrious presidents. Historians gradually shifted to the positive, as Truman was recognized for his towering role in confronting communism and in preserving the New Deal. Today he is routinely reckoned among the top ten presidents.

Harry Truman never catered to the popular view if he thought it was wrong. This proclivity repeatedly landed him in hot water in the early years after he succeeded FDR. It was the tumultuous postwar period when the country was making the painful adjustment to a peacetime economy. Not only was the White House frequently embroiled in political warfare with the Republican-controlled 80th Congress, but it also had to cope with labor conflicts and shortages of consumer goods. Truman bore the brunt of the blame, and by 1948, his popularity had sagged to 35 percent. Almost everyone echoed the gibe of one prominent Republican, Clare Booth Luce, that Truman was "a gone goose" in the upcoming election.

It was taken for granted that the more polished and debonair GOP nominee, New York Gov. Thomas Dewey, would be an easy winner. In fact, long before the 1948 Democratic convention in Philadelphia, there were rebellious calls for another candidate:

Before Ward Connerly It Was Called Affirmative Action. Now It's Called Race Preferences.

■ First Ward Connerly got the University of California to abolish race preferences. ■ Then came Proposition 209, which did the same thing for all of California. ■ After that it was I-200 in Washington State. ■ And now Florida.



Creating Equal: My Fight Against Race Preferences is about Connerly's effort to find that undiscovered country that lies "beyond race." But it is also about his unique- and uniquely American- journey, the powerful testament of a man who dared to challenge the way this country does its racial business.

"In this compelling book, which works both as autobiography and history, Ward Connerly again shows that quality which is now familiar in his character: courage. With unsparing honesty, he shows us the human life behind the public figure and thus answers the seeming mystery of how a black man can be against affirmative action–because his struggle to make a life in America as someone who is black makes his commitment to fairness absolute. This book represents an all-American story and is also a document of the black American experience."

- Shelby Steele

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The New Republic screamed across its April 5 cover "Truman Should Quit." Although FDR had personally tapped Truman as his vice president in 1944, the entire Roosevelt clan felt he was an unworthy heir and should be dumped. James Roosevelt, one of FDR's sons, energetically promoted a Good-Bye Harry movement aimed at drafting Dwight Eisenhower.

Truman would not be swayed. He persevered and won the nomination for a full term at a chaotic but gloomy convention. For one brief shining moment, the delegates came alive when Truman gave a rousing give-'em-hell acceptance speech ripping into Congress for disregarding the country's social ills. It was a clear signal that he would not go down without a fight, revealing a gritty side to his character that had largely gone unnoticed but would become a decisive factor in the fall race.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN: How Harry Truman Won The 1948 Election
by Zachary Karabell
Knopf, $27.50

Still, Democratic unity was shattered. Truman's espousal of civil-rights legislation had angered the once solid South and spawned the third-party conservative Dixiecrat candidacy of South Carolina's youthful Gov. Strom Thurmond (a Democrat in those days). On the left, Truman's tough stand against the dangers of communism had stirred Henry Wallace to desert the ranks and launch the Progressive party.

This splintering left Truman unfazed. He proceeded to carry his campaign directly to the voters, criss-crossing the country by train, whistle-stopping some 31,000 miles, lambasting "the do-nothing" Congress at every stop. He was indefatigable, never seemed dispirited, and his friendly, folksy off-the-cuff style resonated.

It didn't seem to matter. The Roper poll stopped querying voters in September, announcing that the outcome was a foregone conclusion. The press set about preparing the country for the transition, with *Newsweek* releasing a survey of the country's top political reporters and commentators, including such giants as David Lawrence, Walter Lippmann, and Arthur Krock. All 50 forecast a Dewey landslide (prompting Truman to remark that "I know all 50 of those fellows and there isn't a single one who has enough sense to pour sand in a rat hole"). On election eve *Life* magazine published a front-page photo of Dewey, referring to him as "the next president." At the *Washington Star*, veteran political writer Gould Lincoln began his election-day front-page story with the assertion that "Thomas Dewey will be elected president of the United States Tuesday."

All of this is lively fodder for *The Last Campaign*, a well-told chronicle of America's greatest political upset. Historian Zachary Karabell writes with a graphic pungency and verve that sweeps us along right down to the climactic chapter in this legendary drama. Even if he does occasionally overreach in some of his analyses—for example, advancing the dubious argument that Truman's exaggerated rhetoric paved the way for the reckless 1950s McCarthyism attacks on personal loyalties—Karabell has given the story a rich texture in keeping with the times.

Karabell also demolishes a few myths, one being the widely held view that Truman's blunt-spoken speeches were a marvel of spontaneity. Not so. Rather, they were the carefully crafted products of a brilliant campaign staff that discovered and honed the technique of packaging Truman as a simple man of the people. Some of these speeches veered into demagoguery, most notably the references to the "do-nothing" Congress. Far from doing nothing, the legislators actually approved several milestone measures, including the Marshall Plan to stave off the Communist threat to Europe and the Taft-Hartley Labor Act, which Truman called the "slave labor act."

Conventional wisdom has made the pollsters the more culpable, but in reality the press was an equal partner in the crime. True, it was lulled into complacency by the poll findings. But this hardly excused the discounting of impressive evidence suggesting there might be a different ending. As James Reston of *The New York Times* explained: "We did a lousy job of reporting. We talked to each other. We talked to the political bosses. We didn't talk to the people."

In retrospect, there were numerous signs that Truman was a more formidable candidate than believed. For one thing, there were the whistle-stop crowds that began responding to his plain-talking message and grew bigger and bigger. In a late campaign swing across New York state, some 10,000 turned out for a rainy 7 a.m. rally in Dewey's home territory of Albany.

In many ways, as Karabell observes, Truman was the perfect candidate, relishing the role of underdog, loving the campaign trail, chatting with voters, connecting with the land, and discussing the issues he cared deeply about. Above all, he knew how to speak a language that everyone understood, railing against the "special interests," the "rich man's tax bill," and "the gluttons of privilege." In an important farm-belt speech at Dexter, Iowa, he accused the Republicans of "sticking a pitchfork in the farmer's back."

Finally, Tom Dewey turned out to be a bust. Having run against FDR in 1944, Dewey was widely criticized for his sledgehammer attacks against the ailing but beloved president. This time, vowing to be more civil, he reversed tactics and shaved the sharp edges in favor of cautious, lackluster speeches rife with platitudes. By not answering Truman's relentless assaults, he conveyed an arrogance of being above the fray.

Thus, the Dewey campaign was designed to minimize risks. In his mellifluous baritone voice, the GOP nominee pledged an administration of unity, peace, and prosperity, promising that America would continue to stand as "a beacon of freedom in the world." The actress Tallulah Bankhead, a supporter of Truman, ridiculed Dewey's references to unifying the country, asking: "Will all the candidates who are for disunity please stand? The next thing we know he'll be endorsing matrimony, the metal zipper, and the dial telephone."

Dewey enjoyed an excellent reputation as governor, but his aloof manner carried a smug coldness that he could never overcome. Nor could he ever escape Alice Roosevelt Longworth's piercing characterization of him as the little man atop the wedding cake.

Dewey was gracious in defeat as was Truman in victory. Not only was it a stunning triumph, but the margin wasn't even close and Truman was given a hero's welcome when he returned to Washington from his home in Independence, Missouri. A throng of 750,000

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lined the parade route from Union Station, the most enthusiastic Washington salute to any president. When the motorcade passed the old *Washington Post* building on E St., Truman looked up to spot a large banner cheerily proclaiming: "Welcome Home from The Crow Eaters."

PAUL DUKE *is a senior PBS commentator and moderator emeritus of "Washington Week in Review."*

Empty Education

By Thomas Toch

LEFT BACK BY DIANE RAVITCH traces the evolution of a striking paradox in American education: Public schools, particularly secondary schools, have long downplayed the importance of academics for a majority of students. In the late 1800s it was widely thought that after students had grasped the three Rs, schools' primary task should be to develop and discipline students' minds through the teaching of history and other traditional subjects. But only a small fraction of students—under 10 percent—stayed in school beyond the elementary grades in that era. And when compulsory schooling laws and other forces swelled secondary enrollments early in the new century, a new, utilitarian educational philosophy quickly emerged—one that exalted "practical studies" like vocational education on the grounds that the new high-school students simply couldn't handle a serious academic education. Eventually, traditional subjects per se were widely attacked. "There is no aristocracy of 'subjects,'" a national panel of educators wrote in 1944. "Mathematics and mechanics, art and agriculture, history and homemaking all are peers."

Ravitch chronicles this long-standing and deeply seeded anti-intellectualism in public education, from its turn-of-the-century origins to the "life-adjustment" movement of the 1940s and 1950s and the neo-progressivism of the 1960s and early 1970s. As she suggests, and laments throughout the book, the public education profession has been guided for nearly a century by the belief that the difficult task of teaching a wide range of students to use their minds well isn't really necessary; this implies that most students are better served by being

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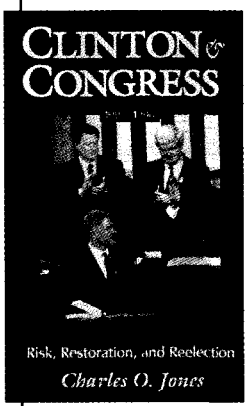

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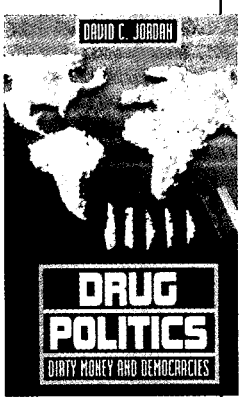

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taught to use their hands rather than their heads.

Such history brings today's "standards movement" into much sharper focus. It's one thing for state policymakers to impose demanding new academic standards on public schools; it's another to realize that public school systems were never organized to deliver a serious academic education to more than a fraction of their students. Most school leaders didn't think they should teach serious academics universally. Nor did they have enough highly-trained teachers to do the job.

The problem with *Left Back* is that the story of public education's long history of anti-intellectualism has been told many times already. By David Cohen in *The Shopping Mall High School* (1985), by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors Lawrence Cremin, in *The Transformation of the School* (1964), and Richard Hofstadter, in *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1970), and by Ravitch herself in *The Troubled Crusade* (1983). There's some fresh material in *Left Back*, but it's essentially a repackaging of the same history.

The last two decades, however, have been very different. Today's school reform movement, which had its beginning marked by the release of the Reagan administration's powerful report, "A Nation At Risk," in the early 1980s, rejects public education's utilitarian tradition. The leading school reformer Ted Sizer declared in 1984 that "the best vocational education" is education "in the use of one's mind." The arduous transformation of public school systems after "A Nation At Risk" into genuinely academic institutions for all kids is a story of great historical significance.

And great drama. The recent battles over new national academic standards and over the best strategies for upgrading public education's infrastructure (teaching, textbooks, tests) have been predictably intense. Unfortunately, Ravitch devotes only the last 58 pages of a 466-page book to these key topics. If only she had reversed the ratio of old material to new.

THOMAS TOCH, *a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, is a contributing editor at* U.S. News and World Report.

LEFT BACK: A Century of Failed School Reforms
by Diane Ravitch
Simon & Schuster, $27.00

A Survivor's Story

By James Fallows

THIS MODEST BOOK IS LIKELY TO work with two different audiences. For the general public, it's the latest respectable entry in a field largely established by John Gunther, in 1949, with *Death Be Not Proud*, his elegiac book about his teen-aged son's battle with brain cancer. The phenomenally popular *Tuesdays With Morrie* is the best-known recent illustration of the genre. These are books in which the presence or possibility of death becomes the occasion for looking past the hurly-burly of daily ambition to lasting questions of family, generosity, courage, love, and purpose in life.

Hamilton Jordan, who in his early thirties was one of the two or three most influential figures in the Carter administration, had by age 50 suffered three different episodes of cancer. The first and most dire was lymphoma, diagnosed just after he turned 40; then skin cancer detected in early stages; then prostate cancer. Most of this book is the story of how Jordan learned about the diseases; the endless encounters with doctors and hospitals as he decided on experimental, high-risk treatment options; and the ways his condition made him think about his use of the years behind him and whatever years he had left.

Jordan intercuts his own pre-illness biography into this story, concentrating on two episodes: living through the civil-rights transformation of the early 1960s, when his eccentric uncle Clarence Jordan was running the multi-racial Koinonia cooperative in Georgia; and his experience as a rural development worker in Vietnam, in 1967. When wondering why he has been so sick so often, Jordan speculates that his frequent exposure to Agent Orange in his early twenties might have had some cumulative effect.

Jordan also mentions his earliest encounters with Jimmy Carter, when Carter was first deciding to run for the White House, but most of the book is about the process and consequences of the author's cancer treatments. In an unforced and convincing way, Jordan comes across as a big-hearted, brave figure who has thought seriously about his experiences and been improved by them. The high-road points he makes will sound treacly if summarized in a review. I'll simply say that I read the book in an evening, with absorption and without effort, and ended up with greatly increased admiration for the author.

NO SUCH THING AS A BAD DAY
by Hamilton Jordan
Longstreet Press, $22.00

This brings us to the other audience: the permanent Washington crowd that lionized Jordan when he came to town and then all but whooped with delight when he was driven out, with his beaten president, four years later. Jordan speaks briefly about his misadventures with the Washington media/social establishment and the embryonic Special Prosecutor system, sounding as if, unlike his employer President Jimmy Carter, he is genuinely beyond score-settling with them. But some of the Washington grandees who remorselessly scorned Jordan (many of whom are still around) might have an uncomfortable moment or two when reading this book.

An unstated operating assumption of the permanent D.C. establishment is that outsiders like Jordan are essentially brought into town on sufferance, for tryouts. They can adapt, "make it," and survive when their time with the administration has ended—or they can be drummed out of town and dismissed as losers. In D.C. terms, Jordan was in the latter category; he worked for a losing administration, and he didn't cut it in society. Yet this book suggests that he has become a more substantial person than most who dismissed him—and even before he went through this transformation, he was a more complicated person than the "Hannibal Jerkin" caricatured in the press. This has made me think of the damage done to other people hooted out of town. (Gary Hart?) If you're thinking of a midsummer gift for a favorite columnist or Style section writer, consider this book.

JAMES FALLOWS, *a contributing editor for* The Washington Monthly, *is the author of six books, most recently* Breaking The News.

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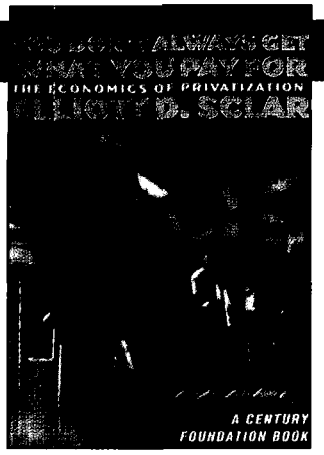

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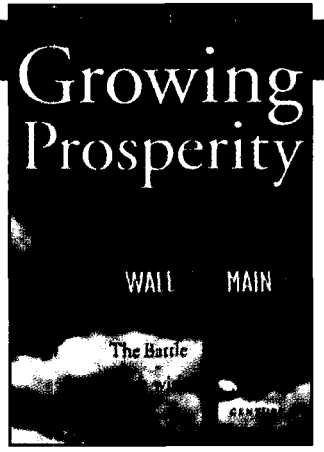

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